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# JEEVADHARA

A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION  
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- THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION -

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*George Soares - Prabhu*

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# JEEVADHARA

## The Living Christ

DOING THE TRUTH  
- THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION -

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# Editorial

The churches in India are heavily committed in the field of formal education. What discernment did they make before deciding to give whole-hearted support to the system? Did they take note of the foreign origin of the system, consider its alienating character and weigh its elitist bias? Did they question its colonialist purposes, and critique its commercial-capitalist values? Did they decide that it was all right that traditional village schools be undermined, that the vast majority of the population be overlooked, that the languages, cultures and needs of the masses be devalued and neglected, and that resources be concentrated on the literary formation of an elite group and that this group help make colonial control of the nation easier and cheaper? Did the churches decide after critical reflection that equipping a thin top layer of europeanized Indians for competition and struggle for wealth and power was educational apostolate and a fine Gospel service they could offer to the nation? Or is it that the churches had no awareness, as the colonialists did have, of the political and economic moorings and implications of formal education? Or, that they did not overlook anybody, but sincerely believed in the bourgeois ideology of a "filter down" process of wealth and culture? Or, may be, they did not question or critique anything, and no idea of discernment ever occurred to them? To them things were simple and clear? They belonged naturally within western expansionist impulses, and went along merrily with conquerors, plunderers and cheats, sharing in the imperialist ideology of 'the white man's burden', and in the devout ideology of the Church's civilizing mission? May be, it is only now the churches are beginning to wake up to reality and look at the educational system with a critical eye and consider retracing the false steps they have taken? Or, perhaps, not beginning yet to wake up?

It is not easy to say with which of these stages and historical perspectives this number of the Journal belongs. The studies differ in their educational thrust and appreciation of the system. All of them have critical questions to put to the existing system. Some are radical and call for quite new approaches if education is to serve the cause of justice and of liberation, and the creation by the people of a new world in which we can

be human and can encounter God. Others seem to think that the system is basically sound, and can be made effective for human purposes through some minor or major adjustments and repairs.

The reader is the judge. (Let this volume be a parable which it takes two to make!). His informed awareness of the Indian scene and of the forces at work in our society will be his guide and norm. If he is a disciple or admirer of Jesus, he will have an additional light. Jesus is to many of us Guru and Rabbi, a Teacher sent by God, one who tells the truth about God's will for the world without worrying about what people think. Jesus had a pedagogy of his own. He would speak only the truth which he did. By doing the truth he would become it, so his word would be reality, deed and relationship. And the truth he cared to become was the truth of the crucified masses of men and women everywhere, and the truth of the new life that is always emerging through their lived, silent or voiced, NO to every oppressive and dehumanising structure and power.

Kurien raises a number of searching questions about the present system of education and closes with a plea for non-formal education based on experience. John is more optimistic about the existing system, though some of its inadequacies he calls in question. Gabriel and Lalita too subject the system to criticism, and point a way to its transformation without necessarily dismantling the external framework of school, syllabi and departmental authority. Mathew and Braz reject the bourgeois type of education altogether, and share with us their search for a new process of education which will truly liberate people and not fetter them in subtle ways.

The implications of Cherian's study of the prophets is that truth is concrete, truth is more than verbal statements, truth is passionate involvement and a process within praxis. In that sense biblical pedagogy is closer to education through struggle than to education through courses given in the classroom. Was not Jesus a master of the new pedagogy we are discovering through commitment to the downtrodden and struggle for their liberation? George is glad to re-introduce him to us.



# Towards a Theology of Education

Since education is a significant process in human society we have to reflect on it as christian believers. In the last analysis, a human person can have only one vision of life and reality, and for us it should be the christian vision – a vision shaped by the christian faith. In this paper an effort is made to understand education in the light of our faith, hoping that the reflections that follow will contribute to the development of a christian vision of education.

I would like to reflect on both formal and non-formal education.<sup>1</sup> Some of these reflections refer directly to the education imparted in schools and colleges, while others are more relevant to the non-formal type of education. It is my conviction that all education is meant to facilitate personal growth – the growth of the human person in society. This calls for a *cognitive* change – the development of a new vision of life; an *attitudinal* change – the acquisition of a new set of values; and a *behavioural* change – the adoption of a new way of acting. Vision, commitment and action are thus essential components of true education.

Education has been described as a process of waking up to life. "Waking up is what all education ought to be about. Waking up to life and its mysteries and its solvable problems and the ways to solve the problems and celebrate the mysteries. Waking up to the interdependencies of all things, to the threat to our global village, to the power within the human race to create alternatives, to the obstacles usually entrenched in economic and political shibboleths that prevent one waking up".<sup>2</sup>

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1. See J. P. Naik, *Some Perspectives on Non-Formal education*, New Delhi, 1977;

G. Gisbert Sauch, "A Theology of Education", *Vidyajyoti*, 43 (1979) 8, pp. 346-359;

J. Velamkunnel, "Non-formal Education in India", *ibid.* pp. 360-376.

2. Matthew Fox, *A Spirituality named Compassion*, Minneapolis, 1979, p. 231.

### The wholeness of man

The nearest English equivalent of the Biblical term for salvation is wholeness. This wholeness implies the harmonious development of all the potentialities God has given to a human person. Education in the broadest sense of the term is meant to aid man in his pursuit of wholeness. As Paul VI has observed, "In the design of God, every man is called upon to develop and fulfil himself, for every life is a vocation. At birth, everyone is granted, in germ, a set of aptitudes and qualities for him to bring to fruition. Their coming to maturity, which will be the result of education received from the environment and personal efforts, will allow each man to direct himself toward the destiny intended for him by his creator".<sup>3</sup>

It is interesting to note that most of the leading educationists of all lands have believed the full flowering of the human on this earth to be the goal of education. A Unesco study speaks of the development of the complete man. "The physical, intellectual, emotional and ethical integration of the individual into a complete man is a broad definition of the fundamental aim for education. We find this pedagogic ideal throughout history, in almost all countries, among philosophers and moralists, and among most theoreticians and visionaries of education. It has been one of the fundamental themes for humanist thought in all times. It may have been applied imperfectly, but it has been fruitful and helped to inspire many of the noblest educational enterprises".<sup>4</sup>

### Community of love

Today it is generally admitted that young people can grow and reach full human maturity only in an atmosphere of love and acceptance. What is required is more than a warm I-Thou relationship between the teacher and the student. While this personal relationship is indispensable, the creation of a community of love in our schools and colleges is vitally important for the success of the educational enterprise. There are, to be sure, innumerable difficulties in the building of such communities. All

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3. *Populorum Progressio* 15.

4. *Learning to Be*, p. 156.



the same the effort is worth making, since the good such communities can do is immense. The creation of a community of love is probably easier in non-formal education groups. It is in the atmosphere of warmth and acceptance these communities provide that young people will be enabled to be authentically themselves, to discover their true selves, and to develop all the talents and powers God has given them.

One singular benefit of a community of love is the emotional growth of the young people. By and large, our schools and colleges are not concerned with the area of human feelings. But as modern psychology has shown, emotions are a significant part of man and have to be taken seriously in all education. Besides, human maturity implies that a person is open to the experience and expression of all his emotions. Fully alive individuals, remarks John Powell, "are able to experience the full gamut and galaxy of human feeling—wonder, awe, tenderness, compassion, both agony and ecstasy".<sup>5</sup>

Besides, fellowship is itself a great value, in fact, one of 'the parameters of the Kingdom's thrust towards the total liberation of man'<sup>6</sup>. God's offer of unconditional love which is the deepest significance of Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God calls for an adequate response on our part in the love and service of our brothers and sisters. It fosters human solidarity and fellowship. And education is meant to promote the unity of mankind by overcoming the painful divisions in the human family—divisions caused by caste loyalty and communal allegiance, economic inequality and racial diversity, religious fanaticism and ideological disputes. The fact that in the past education tended to aggravate rather than heal these divisions does not imply that it cannot be made to serve the cause of communal harmony, national integration and human solidarity.

### Quest for truth

It is one of the goals of education to assist the student in his search for truth. Endowed with intelligence, man has a

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5. *Fully Human, Fully Alive*, p. 20.

6. G. Soares Prabhu, *The Kingdom of God: Jesus' Vision of a New Society*, NBCLC, Bangalore, p 25.

capacity for truth. This has to be developed through education. Unfortunately our schools and colleges tend to obstruct rather than promote a genuine quest for truth. Because of their emphasis on memory, they deprive the students of the joy of search and the adventure of discovery. Nor do they encourage personal thinking and critical reflection. Here we see the truth of what Paulo Freire says of the banking system of education.

Christian educators seem to have a particular difficulty in this matter. They labour under what S. Kappen calls the *dogmatic bias*. "Such bias inhibits all radical questioning and even methodical doubt. It prevents Christians from effectively participating in the contemporary quest after the ever-new horizons of truth. It also condemns them to the pitiable condition of having to reject every new idea, but only to be forced to relent in their opposition as the idea in question becomes widely accepted, and finally, to come on the scene to sanction and legitimate it. Such an approach can only make them suspect in the eyes of the younger generation. Authority as the principle of truth therefore must be subordinated to the principle of obedience to reality, i. e. to the global experience of man".<sup>7</sup>

This raises the question of experience-based education. The totality of human experience must be regarded as the source of all true knowledge. Significantly, catholic theology is beginning to look upon Revelation as experience. Vatican II speaks of how "Israel came to know by experience the ways of God with men".<sup>8</sup> And the apostles encountered God by listening to Christ's words, by observing his actions, by living with him as well as by the experience of the Holy Spirit.<sup>9</sup> It is too early to determine the far-reaching consequences such an understanding of Revelation has for the future of 'dogmatic' Christianity. Still, it clearly indicates the importance of experience in all areas of human life.

There is some danger, of course, that experience may be understood quite narrowly, and thus large areas of reality may

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7. "The Future of Christian Education" *Jeevadhara* 13 (1973) p. 64.

8. *D V* 14

9. See *D V* 7

be rejected as not given in experience. And yet, man has no choice but to depend upon his experience, sincerely trying to respect all its dimensions. "People who demand that there be a higher norm of truth than human experience are asking for an idol. Man has no recourse in his life except to turn to what is finite. He can submit, as he is always tempted to submit, to a text or a ruler or an institution built by his own hands. There is no lack of things available and waiting for divinization. His only other alternative is to follow his own experience and to pursue it wherever it takes him. If there be a God, must not his voice be heard within the experience of a man who listens with all other men for the voice of the divine".<sup>10</sup>

### Social praxis

Two opposing trends are clearly noticeable in the contemporary approach to education. By and large, our education tends to be theoretical and abstract without any vital link with action and involvement in the world. We have generally adopted the pattern of a purely academic education, where stress is laid on intellectual competence in a variety of disciplines. The life and activities of the students are not reflected upon and integrated into the theories that are elaborated in the classroom. As long as classroom teaching and involvement in the world are kept as water-tight compartments we shall have to put up with sterile speculation, on the one hand, and unreflected activity on the other. Only the fusion of action and reflection can lead to true education.

Gandhiji used to speak of educating the brain through the hand. "Useful manual labour, intelligently performed, is the means par excellence for developing the intellect. One may develop a sharp intellect otherwise too. But then it will not be a balanced growth but an unbalanced, distorted abortion. It might easily make one a rogue and a rascal. A balanced intellect presupposes a harmonious growth of body, mind and soul. That is why we give to manual labour the central place in our curriculum of training here. An intellect that is developed through the medium of socially useful labour will be an instrument for service and will not easily be led astray or fall into devious

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10. G. Moran, *Design for Religion*, pp. 45-46.



paths".<sup>11</sup> It is possible that this lack of social praxis as an integral part of education is responsible for the absence of genuine social commitment on the part of many educated Indians. A purely theoretical education never leads to deep personal commitment.

Then, there is the other trend which favours job-oriented education. Some look upon education as a means to acquire practical skills and technical competence. This, too, is a one-sided view. As E. F. Schumacher has remarked, "Science and engineering produce 'know-how'; but 'know how' is nothing by itself: it is a means without an end, a mere potentiality, an unfinished sentence. 'Know-how' is no more a culture than a piano is music. Can education help us to finish the sentence, to turn the potentiality into a reality to the benefit of man?"<sup>12</sup>

All this is intimately connected with the question: what is man? A dualistic understanding of man inevitably leads to an overemphasis of the mind, intellectual pursuits and a purely academic type of education. A pragmatic approach to life favours job-oriented education with its stress on mastering skills and techniques. It is only a holistic view of man which gives due importance to every dimension of the human person that can help develop an integral approach to education. Fortunately such an understanding of man is increasingly to be found in modern philosophy and theology, and corresponds to the Biblical tradition.

### Practice of freedom

Human freedom is central to the Christian understanding of man. "For its part, authentic freedom is an exceptional sign of the divine image within man. For God has willed that man be left 'in the hand of his own counsel' so that he can seek his Creator spontaneously, and come freely to utter blissful perfection through loyalty to Him".<sup>13</sup>

Education is meant to foster human freedom and to help the students in the mature and responsible use of freedom. The

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11. *Basic Education*, p. 85.

12. *Small is Beautiful* p. 66.

13. GS 17

question is whether discipline as we sometimes enforce it in our schools and colleges is the best way to achieve this goal. I have a suspicion that the prevalent concept of discipline is based on a false assumption. Many seem to think that what is important in education is the formation of good habits while one is young, so that one is thoroughly equipped for the business of life. In a fast changing world habits can be a great obstacle to creative adaptation to new situations.

The current idea of discipline may also imply a wrong understanding of man. It seems to regard man as thoroughly corrupt and totally unreliable. He has to be constantly watched, protected, corrected and controlled. Such a view of man is hardly tenable. True, man is a sinner and is exposed to temptations. He is often a slave to selfishness and subject to his passions. Still, man is basically good and must be treated with respect and love.

Education has to become a practice of genuine freedom for the students. This calls for an attitudinal change on the part of the educators. They should cease to exaggerate the importance of law and order, as though the peace and order of the cemetery were a great value. A certain amount of disorder is part of life. Educators should not become over-protective. Human beings can live and grow only in an atmosphere of freedom, and to deprive them of their freedom in the name of safety or security is to condemn them forever to infantile immaturity. After all, God leaves man free even to make a mess of his life. Educators will do well to follow the example of God. It is probably their own inner insecurity that prevents them from doing so. Or, is it their lust for power, their desire to dominate over the students?

When does freedom become licenses? When my exercise of freedom infringes the rights of other people, I am certainly indulging in license. It is also license if I deliberately go against what I perceive to be for my well-being and happiness. In freedom, too, one has to follow the advice of the sage, "To thine own self be true". In these areas, the young people need the guidance and direction of the educators. They need to acquire true freedom, which includes among other things freedom from one's selfishness.

### Towards creativity

Traditionally, education was the means by which society reproduced itself. Its purpose was to initiate the young into the customs, traditions and the ways of behaviour prevalent in society. Obedience and conformity, rather than originality and creativity, was what education fostered. It has been pointed out that medieval universities believed it to be their task to transmit a body of knowledge that had been generated elsewhere. Hence they never bothered to train the students in the art of personal, creative thinking. All this has exerted a great influence on modern education. Besides, in any society educational policies are shaped by those who have power, who profit by the existing state of affairs, and have therefore a vested interest in maintaining the *status quo*. They would not want education to nurture rebels and non-conformists. They would rather want it to turn out cheerful conformists, complacent defenders of the *status quo*, and willing custodians of the established order.

No wonder, then, there is such a frightful dearth of creativity in our country today. In every sphere of human life and activity we notice the painful lack of persons who have the courage to be different, original, creative. And yet, there is a crying need for creativity in this fast changing world of ours. "Unless individuals, groups and nations can imagine, construct, and creatively revise new ways of relating to these complex changes the lights will go out. Unless man can make new and original adaptations to his environment as rapidly as his science can change the environment, our culture will perish. Not only individual maladjustment and group tensions, but international annihilation will be the price we pay for the lack of creativity".<sup>14</sup>

Created in the image of God every man participates in God's creative power. He has the right, and the duty, to be creative. Besides, every person is unique. No two human faces are exactly alike, and no two human persons have the same talents, gifts or potentialities. Every human being can, then, choose to be different, original and creative. But this calls for an approach to education that will respect differences and foster

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14. C. Rogers, *On Becoming A Person*, p. 348.



originality and creativity. The aim of education, it has been said, is to make children unlike their parents.

### Promotion of values

Consciously or unconsciously every educational system transmits a value content, that is, 'a complex of attitudes, habits, social beliefs and forms of conduct'.<sup>15</sup> This transmission takes place principally through the techniques of communication the system adopts and the network of interpersonal relationships it fosters. In order to get an idea of the particular set of values that contemporary education fosters we have to examine its content and method, the type of students admitted and the kind of teachers appointed. We have also to analyse the type of authority and control that is exercised as well as the kind of incentives offered and sanctions imposed. Being a sub-system of society education generally reflects "the class relations which operate in the structure of production. A neocapitalistic economy will have a school system which reproduces, legitimizes and reinforces the values upon which the economic system is based. The relationship among students is competitive rather than co-operative. That of teachers with students is authoritarian rather than democratic. That of students towards their school work, as of worker-employee, is alienating because they do not participate in the decisions concerning the educational process, because they are not motivated by learning and knowledge, and because their educational success is measured by norms and sanctions extrinsic to the task itself. In short, these relationships and values correspond to an ideology proper to a neo-capitalistic economic structure, and are designed to model a work force functional for such a structure".<sup>16</sup>

It takes no great effort to see that our schools and colleges inculcate in the students such bourgeois values as blind competition, ruthless efficiency, self-interest, personal gain, craze for success and narrow individualism. We are thus contributing to the perpetuation of the existing unjust social order.

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15. P. Latapi "Education And Justice" in: *Let No Flame Be Quenched*, a JEA publication, p. 65.

16. Ibid. 66.

But our faith demands that we promote such Christian values as love, justice, selflessness, spirit of service, willingness to collaborate and genuine concern for the poor and the needy. We must help the students to rid themselves of every trace of narrow individualism, by including in them a deep sense of human solidarity and by preparing them for responsible life in society. As the Synod of Bishops, 1971, has observed, "education demands a renewal of heart, a renewal based on the recognition of sin in its individual and social manifestations. It will also inculcate a truly and entirely human way of life in justice, love and simplicity. It will likewise awaken a critical sense, which will lead us to reflect on the society in which we live and on its values: it will make men ready to renounce these values when they cease to promote justice for all men. In the developing countries, the principal aim of this education for justice consists in an attempt to awaken consciences to a knowledge of the concrete situation and in a call to secure a total improvement".<sup>17</sup>

Education for values is a difficult task. Indoctrination hardly ever produces good results in this area. A person will be committed only to those values which he has discovered and accepted through personal reflection on his life experience. Hence a process of action-reflection is necessary. Only through genuine praxis will the perception, appreciation and appropriation of true human values take place.

### Christian hope

Hope is so fundamental to Christianity that St. Paul does not hesitate to describe the Christians as those who have hope (cf. Eph. 2:12; 1 Thess 4:13). According to St. Peter, "We have his promise, and look forward to new heavens and a new earth, the home of justice" (2 Pet 3:13). Hence, Christians are meant to be forward-looking and forward-moving. "For here we have no permanent home, but we are seekers after the city which is to come" (Heb. 13:1).

Now Christian hope is the affirmation of the changeability of man and the perfectibility of the world. It is an invitation to regard every stage in the growth of a person and every phase in the development of society as being provisional. These are not the final kingdom, they have to be transcended.

In the past, Christians usually worked for personal conversion, oblivious of the tremendous influence that social structures exert on human beings. In modern times, many people including Christians endeavour to transform the structures of society, ignoring the need for personal conversion. But the fact

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17. *Justice in the World*, 51.

of the matter is that we need both personal and social change. "It is becoming more and more evident that the structures of our society are among the principal formative influences in our world, shaping men's ideas and feelings, shaping their most intimate desires and aspirations; in a word shaping man himself. Hence, to work for the transformation of these structures is to work for the spiritual as well as the material liberation of man".<sup>18</sup> But mere structural changes are not enough. "Injustice must be attacked at its roots in the heart of men by eradicating those attitudes and habits which bring forth the structures of oppression".<sup>19</sup> This calls for a conversion of heart.

All this has implications for our educational work. It should be one of the cherished goals of education to imbue the students with a deep sense of hope and to fire them with an eager desire for change. This sense of hope is all the more necessary today, when the enormity of the task of building a new and more just society in India frightens even the most valiant among us and impels them to throw up their hands in utter despair. Here it is good for us to remember the encouraging words of Vatican II: "We can justly consider that the future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations with reasons for living and hoping."<sup>20</sup>

### The Church's service

It often happens that a discussion of the Church's role in education gets narrowed down to a vindication of her right to run educational institutions. This is to a certain extent understandable since the Magisterium has repeatedly affirmed "the Church's right to establish and run schools of every kind and at every level".<sup>21</sup> But it would be more profitable to inquire into the kind of educational service the Church is called upon to render to the people of a developing country like India, and to examine how this service is related to her true mission. It is certainly beyond the scope of this paper to undertake a thorough investigation of the nature and imperatives of the Church's mission in India today. That she can and ought to make a significant contribution towards the creation of the new man and true human fellowship in our land is undeniable. And education can be a powerful means for the achievement of this goal.

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18. The 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus: *Our Mission Today* 40.

19. *Ibid.* 32.

20. *GS* 31.

21. Vatican II, *Declaration on Education* 8. In note 1, the Declaration refers to earlier documents of the Magisterium.



And yet, the Church's involvement in the prevailing system of education in our country is highly questionable. She is actively participating in a system that tends to perpetuate the existing social inequalities. "The formal education system in India is now a gigantic enterprise with about 700,000 institutions, 3.5 million teachers, 100 million students, and an annual expenditure of Rs. 25,000 million. And yet it hardly benefits the common people who are poor or very poor. Most of them are still illiterate; a large proportion of their children do not go to school, and most of those that do, drop out sooner rather than later. A very small minority does climb up, through the limited vertical mobility that the system provides, and is co-opted into the system which is thus legitimized. But the main beneficiaries of the system (which over-emphasizes secondary and higher education that receive about 60 per cent of the total educational expenditure) are really the rich and well-to-do classes who form the top 30 per cent of the income groups and who occupy about 70 per cent of the places at the secondary stage and about 80 per cent of the seats at the university stage. Besides, the system is not adequately related to national needs and aspirations, is highly inefficient and wasteful, and has become greatly disfunctional, especially in higher education. Nothing short of a major educational revolution can meet the challenges of the desperate educational situation which is becoming worse every year."<sup>22</sup>

Our hope for a better future seems to lie in non-formal types of education. It is these that can more effectively contribute to the creation of the India of our dreams, where all our people can live and grow in freedom, equality, justice and peace. There is some reason to believe that the Church is slowly coming to this realisation. The General Meeting of the CBCI, held in Mangalore in January 1978, clearly stated: "Our future educational efforts should move more and more in the direction of non-formal education and adult literacy."<sup>23</sup> If effective steps are taken to implement this directive of our bishops quickly and conscientiously, then we can be optimistic about the future.

Papal Seminary  
Pune

Kurien Kunnumpuram

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22. *Education For Our People*, compiled by Citizens For Democracy, New Delhi, 1978.

23. *Report of the General Meeting of the CBCI*, Mangalore, 1978, pp. 83-84.

# Education - A Christian Enterprise

India has a vast educational system. With its 110 universities, 4000 affiliated colleges, 46,000 high schools and numerous other schools, it is something to make one proud - at least of the size if not the quality. It has grown at an enormous pace after independence and still keeps growing though not as fast. The commitment of the Church to education in India is dwarfed by the national involvement. Yet in absolute terms it is immense. The Roman Catholic Church runs about 180 senior and junior colleges, 1750 high schools, 570 technical and training institutes and about 6000 middle, primary and nursery schools. It is certainly no mean contribution to the national effort. The nature of the contribution is greatly enhanced by its superior quality. Till today there continues to be a heavy rush for admissions to Christian educational institutions. This article intends to probe into the theological reasons for the commitment of the Church to education. It hopes to examine the reasons given by the Church itself for her involvement in education.

The key document which clearly expresses the *sensus ecclesiae* in the matter of education is the Declaration on Christian Education of Vatican II (*Gravissimum Educationis*, GE). It is not our intention to give a detailed commentary on the document, but to reflect on particular elements of our faith-content which give rise to the Church's conviction about her educational involvement.

## 1. The Church's mission

Holy Mother the Church, in order to fulfil the mandate she received from her divine founder to announce the mystery of salvation to all men and to renew all things in Christ is under an obligation to promote the welfare of the whole life of man, including his life in this world in so far as it is related to his heavenly vocation. She has therefore a part to play in the development and extension of education (GE: Introduction).

What is important to note in this passage is the comprehensive nature of salvation. It does not concern only the spiritual

or moral aspect of man, but "the whole life of man" and "all things". We are accustomed to think of human life in terms of dichotomies — the sacred and the secular, or the heavenly and the earthly. These are different aspects of what is a single reality. This explains why the Church does not restrict herself to the teaching of the sacred sciences. The secular sciences also come within the ambit of her involvement in teaching.

The mandate received by the Church from her divine founder is to "announce" and to "renew". To announce (or proclaim) in theological jargon is to communicate to people a message that is relevant to them, that can therefore interest them and can evoke a response which will affect their lives and produce a behavioural change. Proclamation most frequently is done by language expressed through the spoken or written word. Other forms of communication are the graphic and performing arts and body language (non-verbal communication). All behaviour can be a means of communication which is what is implied in "action speaks louder than words" or when we speak of "reading a situation". But the most frequent means of communication even for the divine message still remains the word, written or spoken. Understanding the message requires education in language. This education the child already receives when it learns to speak. It hears sounds uttered by others, associates them with particular objects or actions and itself learns to utter the same sounds. The imagery of God as Word or utterance originates from the need and use of the spoken word for human relationship right from babyhood among all peoples. Education in the written word or the 3 r's is a more "formal" education and starts later at home itself or at school or in adult literacy classes.

In Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the so-called religions of the Book, the religious message crystallised out in written form or scripture very early in their development. It is not that other religions do not have their scriptures. But the place of the Book is quite different. Judaism and Christianity claim their Bible to be divinely inspired. Islam claims its Quran to be divinely dictated. It would be interesting to study the relationship between the concept of the Book and the development of literacy education in the milieu of these religions.



The three above-mentioned religions are called by Zaehner "prophetic religions" as against others like Hinduism which are "wisdom religions". In a so-called prophetic religion the message is communicated by God to a person or group of persons at a particular time and place but is meant for all times and for all the people either of a particular race (Judaism) or of the whole world (Christianity and Islam). The message has thus to be proclaimed not only by the first listener or group of listeners. Every subsequent group of learners becomes proclaimers in their turn. The message is thus handed down (tradition). Handing down is not merely a question of repeating words whether spoken or written but of translating from one language to another, from one culture to another and from one historical and personal situation to another. All this process implies education in the proclaimers as well as in the listeners that goes well beyond language and includes the cultural and historical.

This explains why education and, particularly, the eradication of illiteracy has always been an essential part of Christian missionary activity. Today more than ever, the Church needs to boost her efforts at eradicating illiteracy. An intensive campaign for literacy is called for. In India only 36% of the people can read and write. Although in 1971 the literacy rate was 29%, the number of illiterates, because of population rise, has actually increased from 37 crores in 1971 to 45 in 1981. This situation is a poser to the Church. Illiteracy is a bottleneck in development. This by itself would be sufficient reason for the Church's concern. But there is even more to it. Illiteracy can be a serious obstacle to a full grasp of the Church's message, which is proclaimed both by the spoken as well as by the written word - tradition and scripture. Not only listening but reading also is an essential means of communication. The Church has enormous resources at her disposal for tackling illiteracy. The first resource is the Christian community itself which is a very largely literate group. Besides this, the impressive array of Christian educational institutions is an even more powerful resource. Through extension programmes staff and students can be mobilised to make a serious dent in illiteracy. Apart from the service done to their disadvantaged brethren and the contribution made, however indirectly, to the spread of the Good News, there would be spin-offs to the institutions themselves in the way of increased

awareness of people's problems and a stronger zest for studying their solutions.

## **2. Renewal in Christ**

What is the content of the Christian message? It can be summed up in one word: Jesus Christ. He is the mystery of salvation. The active response of those who listen to this message will bring about salvation which is the same as "renewal of all things in Christ". This is a pregnant idea taken from Ephesians 1:10, which in the Jerusalem Bible reads "that God would bring everything together under Christ, as head, everything in the heavens and everything on earth".

Three thoughts are entwined here: integration of the human race, renewal of the universe and the headship of Christ.

### **a. Integration of the human race**

The proclamation of the mystery of salvation is a call to break down barriers of race and caste, not to allow language, culture and religion to divide, to narrow down the widening gap between rich and poor, to avoid discrimination on grounds of sex, to build up, in short, a just and integrated society. "But now in Christ Jesus, you that used to be so far apart from us have been brought very close... he has made the two into one and broken down the barrier which used to keep them apart... to create one single New Man in himself out of the two of them..." Eph. 2:13-15.

The concept of the Mystical Body that is put forth in these words is specifically Christian, i. e., a revealed truth. But it is ultimately the blossoming of the social nature of man and a fully satisfying answer to his need for being member of a human community. The Church by her witness and proclamation is calling men and women to live as an integrated community. The school can be an effective vehicle for such a proclamation, if it is a community where students and teachers coming from different castes, social classes and faiths can feel at home with one another and work harmoniously together. When teachers and administrators, working as a team, build up a community and create an atmosphere of love and acceptance, young people can grow and reach full human maturity.

The Kothari Education Commission (KC) underlines the importance for achieving social and national integration in India (KC:1.07). Indian society is stratified and the social distance between rich and poor, educated and uneducated and between castes is large and ever-widening. The fact that the creation of an integrated and egalitarian society in India is extremely difficult makes the responsibility of the schools in this matter even more binding. The Church has in her educational institutions an effective tool for responding to this challenge of integration. For her, all integration is a "restoration in Christ". All social classes are welcome to her schools so that "by providing for friendly contacts between pupils of different characters and backgrounds it encourages mutual understanding". GE:5. In modern society, an important tool for social integration is shared responsibility and democratic functioning. Democracy is not just a form of government but a way of life that has to be imbibed from early years. Education is an 'experiment in living' in "a spirit of large-hearted tolerance, of mutual give and take, of the appreciation of ways in which people differ from one another" KC:1.68. This is a genuinely Christian spirit and has immense scope for its exercise in the social organisation and climate of a school.

Catholic schools and colleges in India were started mostly for two reasons: one, to educate the Catholics, and two, to create a presence of the Church in non-Christian areas and among influential non-Christians with a view to making her better known, breaking down prejudices and clearing away obstacles to her mission work and to conversion. This latter purpose has given an "elitist" image to many of our institutions. Recently they have awakened to the educational needs of the underprivileged in general, Catholic and others. Many institutions are changing their admission policies in order to accommodate more of the poor into their classrooms. This is all to the better, but it could become a futile move, if done as "relief work" which helps the underprivileged to move into privilege, to forget and even to exploit in their turn the masses from which they were pulled out. This is not the integration as understood in Ephesians. St. Paul speaks of breaking down barriers between two peoples, who were kept apart from and were alien to each other. Now Christ has made the two peoples into one.

which is called the New Man. It is not one individual or even a group of them, but a whole new society. It is not, therefore, a question of merely pulling individuals out of an impoverished, exploited and alienated mass, but helping to create a renovated society in which such a mass simply does not exist. This is the integration which is the objective of the Church's endeavours in her schools and colleges.

## **b. Renewal of the universe**

"Everything in the heavens and everything on earth" in Eph 1:10 means the whole universe. In biblical thought, man is closely related to the universe. According to Genesis, God makes man to his "own image and likeness" (1:27) which means to "be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven and all living animals on the earth" (1:28) in short, to have the whole world under his control. For St. Paul, "Creation still retains the hope of being freed, like us, from its slavery to decadence, to enjoy the same freedom and glory as the children of God" Rom. 8:21.

One can sense here a call to the development and proper use of natural resources. It is a development that maintains the ecological balances of nature and does not indulge in a destruction of the environment so as to make the earth inhospitable for present and future generations. It is a use that caters to the legitimate needs of *all* men and not just to the consumerist fads of the affluent few. This is the right progress to which the Church calls all men. It can do this with particular effectiveness in and through its educational institutions. The training in productive skills in her technical institutes and the teaching of the natural and social sciences and of literature and languages in her schools and colleges is not a mere imparting of knowledge and skills but also a call for a commitment to genuine progress and transformation (cfr GE: 1). Such a transformation can be brought about only by education. The Kothari Commission, referring to this transformation as 'change on a grand scale', is convinced that if it is "to be achieved without violent revolution (and even for that it would be necessary) there is one instrument and one instrument only, that can be used: EDUCATION....it is a sure and tried instrument which has served other countries well in their struggle for development. It can, given the will and the skill, do so for India" 1.14.



Through education, the Church makes her own contribution to renewal. This may look like encroaching on the temporal domain. But she cannot restrict her activity purely to the spiritual order. The reason is that this order is so closely linked with the temporal that the work of Christ's redemption, although it concerns essentially the salvation of men, takes in also the "renewal of the whole temporal order" (Vat. II. Decree on Lay People:5). Education, including the teaching of the secular sciences, is an important part of the Church's activity in which it offers "its assistance to all peoples...for the good of society in this world and for the development of a world more worthy of man" GE: 3.

### c. Headship of Christ

All authentic development is a movement towards Christ, the omega point of Teilhard de Jardin. All creation came into being "in Christ" and "for Christ" (Jn. 1:2; Col. 1:16) and is "groaning" (Rom. 8:22) for its fulfilment in him. Not every man is conscious of the role of Christ in the progress of the universe even if he himself may be actively contributing to it. It is the Church's mission to increase the Christ-consciousness in the world. In former times one of the reasons for establishing Christian schools in mission countries was to make people aware of Christ and promote conversions. Today there are many reasons why the Church cannot use her schools for actively propagating Christianity. There would be difficulties from the government which may endanger the very existence of the institution. Non-Christians may no longer send their children to it. There may be other such reasons of expediency. But there is a more fundamental reason. Given the impressionable age of the hearers, active propagation of Christianity can constitute unfair moral pressure. However, a certain articulation of the role of Christ which is far from appearing as pressure is unobjectionable. What is however of the very essence of a Christian school is a sincere lived witness to Christian values in the school community. This can be a seed which could germinate and sprout with God's grace and in God's own good time. Often a school organisation gives a counter-witness to Christian values. Take, for instance, cooperation which is an expression of community, a very Christian value. The opposite is cut-throat competition. Without perhaps realising it, we encourage this latter by the

way we motivate our students, viz., to surpass the others. Our system of giving ranks and distributing prizes only to the top-most rankers promotes cut-throat competition rather than co-operation. There is need to subject our methods to a penetrating analysis to unearth the real unchristian value-system we may be proclaiming.

There is another reason given for the existence of at least some of the Catholic educational institutions that is closely related to the mission of the Church. It is to create favourable dispositions in influential persons who can affect church activities outside the institution. This happens through the good name and prestige of the institution. It is done by befriending them through their children and relatives admitted into the institution. It occurs when alumni of the institution themselves get into positions of influence. These reasons are, doubtless, extraneous to the nature of the school itself. But the Christian school or college is part of the total mission of the Church and cannot isolate itself from the work of the rest involved in this mission.

### 3. Mature personality

A Christian education, like all good education, helps to develop a mature personality. In GE(1) there is an excellent description of a mature person. To be mature is more than being just physically grown, possessing the basic intellectual abilities and equipped with the necessary and useful skills to be able to participate actively in the life of society. To be mature means to be open to dialogue with others and to be willing to work for a common good. Above all, it means to assume responsibility for the proper development of one's own life. Such a self-reliance or self-determination is characterised by a constant effort, unwavering courage and, most of all, by freedom of choice. The mature man makes sound moral judgements, and, what is more relevant to the concept of maturity, his judgements are based on principles of truth and love which he has freely chosen and to which he is personally committed.

GE(2) refers to Eph. 4:13 when it speaks of manhood according to the mature measure of Christ. This idea, which refers to Christ's Mystical Body, is applied to the mature Christian. But it can also be applied in a certain sense to all who seek to be educated in a Christian institution. The complete

Pauline understanding of maturity is conveyed in Eph. 4:13–15, 22–24. Being mature means two things. One is leaving behind the fickleness and vulnerability of childhood. A child is easily led away from the truth. A mature person has stability. But this stability is based on truth, he “lives by the truth”. Hence he is open to dialogue, because he is a seeker after truth.

A second element in maturity for St. Paul is love. “If we live by the truth and in love, we shall grow in all ways into Christ... So the whole body grows until it has built itself up in love” Eph. 4:15–16.

This is the Mystical Body. But love is the cementing factor of all social integration and communal harmony. The Christian school contributes towards the achievement of such harmony by helping to form mature persons, who, in the way described by Eph. 4:25–32, are people who have undergone an inner growth which expresses itself in social–personal relationships based on love.

Going back to the GE description of a mature person, an important element that is referred to there is freedom of choice. The mature person is led to a moral action by a conscious inner motivation and not by blind impulse or external constraints (cfr. Vatican II’s Pastoral Constitution on the *Church in the Modern World*:17). Often it is believed that education to moral maturity means the lecturing on do’s and don’ts and the provision of punishments and rewards to enforce them. This is good and necessary at an early stage of moral growth. But the child should be helped to grow out of this stage and rise to that where it acts because it sees the inner worth of an action or avoids doing something because it understands its intrinsic repugnance. At this stage the child uses its freedom responsibly. Education to moral maturity is basically an education to freedom. Fear of punishment or desire for a reward are baser, even though valid motives for action, because they imply a form of moral pressure, a certain loss of freedom. But when one’s behaviour is guided by a sense of values and an adherence to principle, then, indeed, one behaves with human dignity and not like a slave. This is maturity characterised by responsible use of freedom. Even rules and regulations made by authorities do not irk the mature person as imposition because he sees their

intrinsic purpose. If he fails to see this, he sincerely questions and honestly seeks to understand their inner justification. It is only when he fails in this that he makes a determined bid to have the rules changed or revoked. Authorities may often consider this as disobedience and even rebellion and may attempt to "discipline" him, i. e. to enforce silent conformity.

Catholic educational institutions have a reputation for discipline. But it is worth examining whether this discipline is subject to reason and welcomes questioning or it is a rigid enforcement of silent conformity: "you do it because I say so" – a discipline that stunts personality and even cuts off growth towards self-discipline in freedom.

A final, yet important, ingredient of maturity is, what Gordon Allport calls, a "unifying philosophy of life" (Cfr. his excellent chapter: *The Mature Personality in Pattern and Growth in Personality*). It is an outlook on life that unifies one's personality. There are many possible unifying philosophies but what is most comprehensive and integrative is what Allport refers to as religious sentiment. To be really comprehensive and integrative this religious sentiment should not be a hangover from childhood, or something that caters to the self – esteem of the individual or that the person finds useful in serving his immediate ends, or that is an escape mechanism. It should be a really adult faith, regarded as a value in itself to which the person surrenders himself without "using" it. No Christian education is complete without a religious formation, a stimulation "to know and love God more perfectly" (GE:1). A problem arises here with regard to the vast number of non-Christians attending Christian schools. The Church provides for its own children "an education by virtue of which their whole lives may be inspired by the spirit of Christ". But it also has to assist all "for the promotion of a well-balanced perfection of the human personality" G. E: 3.

If we believe that religious faith is part of this well-balanced perfection, then should we not help our non-Christian students also to grow in it? But how do we go about it? The so-called moral science or value education given in most Catholic schools could be a unifying philosophy, but more often than not it turns out to be a set of lifeless abstract principles. It is



a poor substitute for living religious faith. Values will not ultimately survive the onslaught of moral decadence in the country unless they are based on faith. If by faith we understand a commitment of self to the transcendent, then every person whatever be his religious affiliations is capable of possessing faith and of growing in it. Religion, as considered distinct from faith, is a vehicle for mediating faith and articulating it. Schools and colleges should explore the possibility of using the religious culture of their students, be they Christians, Hindus, Muslims or of any other religion, in order to deepen their faith. This is a matter that deserves study both at the theological as well as at the practical level. There are good programmes for the faith-formation of Christian students. But as Christian educators we are also obliged to help towards maturing in faith the students of other religions who frequent our institutions. A mature faith is characterised by two important qualities among others. One is an openness to religious cultures other than one's own. It is the best antidote to bigotry and contributes no little to the social integration already spoken about. The other quality of a mature faith is the power of critique or discernment in one's own religious culture. Openness and discernment are the marks of an honest seeker for truth. Such a person is really moving towards Christ even if he does not bear the name of Christian.

## Conclusion

In Eph. 4:24, St. Paul speaks of putting on the new self which is created in God's likeness. It connotes the attainment of all that man was intended to be when God first made him to his own image, the lord of God's creation. Education builds up the new man, it creates the image of God in the pupils. Creation to God's image is not accomplished at one shot, but is a becoming and it is in education that this becoming goes on. Persons are helped to mature by classroom learning, through experience of community, by being stimulated to responsible use of freedom and to a growth in faith. It is through such persons that the Church can hope to fulfil her mission of creating a new world, of renewing the whole universe in Christ.

# Values and Trends in Today's Education

## Introduction

In order to assess the intrinsic worth and utility of today's system of education, one has to reflect on its nature, purpose and historical development. An analysis of the content of education, its policies and its methodology will further shed light on the values advocated by the educational system in existence today.

No education is neutral for it is a subsystem of society. Through its syllabus, methodology and organization, it supports, directly or indirectly, the values of the existing social order. Or it acts as a challenge to it in order to bring about a radical qualitative transformation, leading to liberation and development of man-in-community.

## Informal, formal and non-formal education

The teaching and learning process can be distinguished into informal, formal and non-formal education. Informal education is that which takes place in ordinary life-situations. A growing child, for example, imbibes the values, defined or undefined, of the family and of the socio-economic environment of the group or class to which the family belongs. This socialization process continues through contacts with members of peer-groups, through the approval or disapproval the child receives, etc. Honesty, for example, is a virtue desired by all. But 'honesty' for a child brought up in a "business community" and 'honesty' for a child belonging to the working-class may have different contours and qualitative specifications. The same can be said about "success" in life and the "means" to achieve it.

Formal education is that which is generally imparted through the institutional set-up. It has a definite curriculum, the same for all the learners regardless of their background, aptitudes or goals in life. Success in formal education is measured through the examinations leading to career-oriented degrees and

diplomas which also act as social status symbols. Non-formal education, on the other hand, is life-oriented. The learners themselves, their socio-economic situation and their problems form its content. Non-formal education combines learning, living, and working as a single unit.

### **Education and society**

Education is an integral and continuous process in any given form of society. Its value system undergoes changes according to the types of society which emerge through history. For instance, in the primitive communal tribal society (remnants of which are still in existence), economic, social and political equality was a community-value which was considered all-important. Forced by circumstances and with only primitive technology in their possession, people had to share and care for one another as members of a large family. Since every individual was considered important to the common good of the tribe, his or her rights within the group were also respected. Leadership was not handed down from father to son as inheritance. Leadership went with aptitude and skill, say, in hunting. The values of equality, respect for the individual and work for the common good were learned in the tribe itself as a way of life.

As slave society emerged, economic and social inequalities surfaced leading to a concentration of political, cultural and religious power in the hands of the masters. A clear distinction between "masters" and "slaves" was the result. Education, now systematized and institutionalized, became a monopoly of the masters and the wealthy. It was natural that all values, including religious and moral ones, taught formally or advanced non-formally, favoured the masters. Respect for unlimited private property or for personal profit, unquestioning obedience to the masters and hard work by the slaves, would be examples of values inculcated through education in the slave society. The feudal form of society further strengthened this value system though some concessions were made to the serfs. These values are still rampant in the underdeveloped countries, such as India, where the feudal or the semi-feudal system has a strong grip on the lives of the masses especially in the rural areas.

In the capitalist form of society, the values integrated through informal and formal education are firmly based on indi-



vidualism. Limitless private property even to the extent of denying many people of basic necessities of life, is a capitalist value. Ownership of an extra house to be rented out to the homeless, is considered not a social sin but a value desirable and therefore, to be cultivated. So too personal success for oneself through cut-throat competition highly valued. Some concessions, of course, are made to the poor who are the majority, such as statutory minimum wages. But these concessions are only safety-values or adjustments for the maintenance of the status quo of private property and personal profit through competition. Law fixes minimum wages. But there is no law to limit profits. The system has thus widened the gap between the few (the rich) and the majority (the poor) as the surplus in the form of profits is amassed by the owners of the means of production and as the workers are entitled only to the wages. In such a socio-economic atmosphere, it is but natural to imbibe the values of the existing system based on individualism, competitive market and personal profit. The educational system which is both the product and the legitimizer of the same socio-economic-political system can produce only a 'carbon copy man' of that system. Thus the social situation of inequalities, injustice and exploitation is maintained and perpetuated by our educational system.

### **Need for a change:**

Time and again, the need for change in the system of education has been expressed by eminent and committed educationists of our country.

The Indian Education Commission (1966), known also as the Kothari Commission, called for a new orientation in the field of education in order to relate it to productivity, to strengthen social and national integration, to consolidate democracy as a way of life and to help build character by cultivating social, moral and spiritual values (Education Commission 1.20). J. P. NAIK made an earnest appeal for the same when he stated that "in the concept of education, we must recognize the significance of social values and objectives, cooperation, the complementarity of intellectual and manual work, promotion of skills and building of character, rather than consign the illiterate and the drop outs to the eternal drudgery and poverty which has been running this country for centuries" (*Education for Our People*, 2.07; 3. 02).

The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (March, 1977) has also given this as a special task to the believers. It states the following: "School is a place of integral formation by means of a systematic and critical assimilation of culture. The vital approach takes place in the school in the form of personal contacts and commitments which consider absolute values in a life-context and seek to insert them into a life-frame work. The school must help him spell out the meaning of his experiences and their truths. Any school which neglects this duty and which offers merely pre-cast conclusions hinders the personal development of its pupils. From this it is clear that the school has to review its entire programme of formation, both its content and methods used, in the light of that vision of the reality from which it draws its inspiration and on which it depends. It must never be forgotten that the purpose of instruction at school is education, that is, the development of man from within freeing him from that conditioning which would prevent him from becoming a fully integrated human being. It is one of the formal tasks of a school to draw out the ethical dimension for the precise purpose of arousing the individual's inner spiritual dynamism and to aid his achieving that moral freedom which complements the psychological."

According to the same Sacred Congregation, the system of education should address itself to the needs of society.

"Precisely because the school endeavours to answer the needs of a society characterized by depersonalization and a mass production mentality, it must develop persons who are responsible and inner directed, capable of choosing freely in conformity with their conscience."

The purpose of education, then, to quote Julius Nyerere, "is liberation through the development of man as a member of society".

Describing today's system of education imparted through the classroom and the media the Third Synod of Bishops (Justice in the World, 1971) states: "Schools and the mass media tend to be so much taken up with the established order of things that all they manage to produce is a carbon copy man whom that order wants produced in its own image - a far cry from the New Man of the Gospel".

It is a foregone conclusion, therefore, that education in India requires to be restructured if we are to address ourselves to the inauguration and formation of the New Man of the Gospel through educational processes. The present Indian education in its origin was not meant to create the New Man of the Gospel in the Indian socio-cultural context. When Macaulay and others planned education for India about 150 years ago, it was to create aliens out of some of us Indians in order that the products of this system could sustain and strengthen colonial rule in the country. Its purpose was: "To train Indians with a view to staff the vast politico-administrative machine and to imbue the personnel with the underlying principles and procedures governing it.

To train and educate people to acquire skills and assimilate values arising out of the new capitalistic economic system which the British were creating in India.

To create a class Indian by birth but British in taste, manners and outlook who would be relied upon as strong supporters of the British rule.

To include new values among Indian people with a view to civilize them in the spirit of western liberal Christian concepts."

(Policy Statement, quoted from Bram van Leeuwen and others, *Education and Development in India*, Inst. of Sociology, Utrecht University, Holland, 1975, page 65.)

Nothing substantial has changed since Macaulay's days. In independent India, the driver has been replaced, but it is the same old carriage and the same beaten track. The new rulers, now Indian by birth but the products of the same system, have further strengthened the system. In the words of J. Nehru, "The British have created a new caste or class in India, the English speaking class, which lived in a world of its own, cut off from the mass of its population, and looked even while protesting, towards its rulers." (*Discovery of India*, 1965, P. 413)

The Education Commission (1966) has further summed it up as follows: "The existing system of education is largely unrealistic to life and there is a wide gulf between its content



and purpose and the concern of national development. . . . . The nature of transformation needed in our educational system is generally recognized. What we wish to emphasize is its urgency. Traditional societies which desire to modernize themselves have to transform their educational system before trying to expand it, because the greater the expansion of the traditional system of education, the more difficult and costly it becomes to change its character. This truth has been lost sight of during recent years. We have greatly tried to expand a system which continues to have the same features it had at its creation about a century ago." (1:18; 1:19)

This has been the case elsewhere in the world too. The system of education has turned its attention "exclusively or predominantly to those from wealthier social classes" and has contributed towards maintaining their privileged position, continuing to favour a society which is unjust." (Sacred Cong. for Catholic Education, March, 1977).

### **The undesirable social order**

For the creation of an egalitarian society, then, the existing social order requires to be challenged through a new process of education. For this we may draw our inspiration from the doctrine of the Church herself.

In most countries, the social order has not changed much since the days of Pope Leo XIII who condemned it in his Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in 1891. Leo's doctrine was further expanded by Pius XI forty years later in his "*Quadragesimo Anno*". "Society today still remains in a strained and therefore unstable and uncertain state, for the simple reason that it is founded on classes with contradictory interests, hence opposed to each other, and consequently prone to enmity and strife" (No. 82).

Towards the close of the nineteenth century, new economic methods and new development of industry had in most nations led to such consequences that human society appeared more and more divided into two classes. The first, small in numbers, enjoyed practically all the comforts so plentifully supplied by modern invention. The second class, comprising the immense multitude of working men was made up of those who, oppressed by dire poverty, struggled in vain to escape from the straits which encompassed them" (No. 3).

The Pope stresses again and again that an unjust social order is being perpetuated by the existing system: "The immense number of propertyless wage earners on the one hand, and the enormous wealth of the fortunate few on the other, are an unanswerable argument that the earthly goods so abundantly produced in this age of industrialization are far from rightly distributed and equitably shared among various classes of men" (No. 60). "It is patent that in our days not alone wealth is accumulated, but immense power and despotic economic domination are concentrated in the hands of a few" (No. 105). "This concentration of power has, in turn, led to a threefold struggle. First, there is the struggle for dictatorship in the economic sphere itself; then the fierce battle to acquire the control of the State so that its resources and authority may be abused in the economic struggles. Finally, the clash between the States themselves" (Q. A. No. 108).

The recent papal writings have also reflected the same. While calling for a change in the existing social order, *Mater et Magistra* (1961, in Nos. 36, 38, 39, 40, 69, and 159), *Pacem in Terris* (1971) by John XXIII and *Redemptor Hominis* by John Paul II (Nos. 13, 15 & 16), also refer to it. They call for a transformation of today's structures so that men and women, the image of God on earth, may be truly liberated and redeemed from within and from without.

But the present-day education, including the one imparted through Christian institutions, does not reflect this prophetic condemnation of the social sin-situation which has deprived people of their dignity and tarnished God's image in them. Sad to say, not even our catechetics and the teaching of moral science, by and large, include this as a part of its curriculum. In the words of the Synod III (Justice in the world), our education instead of being an "attempt to awaken consciences to a knowledge of the concrete situation and a call to secure total improvement", has in its content and method become an encouragement to narrow individualism.

### **Education for development:**

What we need today, therefore, is a different process of education in order to make it a means of liberation of men and women as members of society and citizens of the Kingdom of

God. Education, instead of being abstract and other-worldly, or bypassing the real issues or legitimising the social sin-situation, has to address itself to the real economic, social and political spheres in a religious or transecular context so that both individuals and structures can be redeemed and nurtured anew. The type of redemption and development, however, depends very largely on the content of education and the attitudes of the educators themselves, that is, on their particular understanding of what society, social change and development today is and should be.

If, for example, underdevelopment, poverty and destitution are considered as caused by forces entirely *outside man's control*, that is, as caused by fate or God's will or by uncontrollable physical environment, then we have a type of education which will not inculcate any active concern for social change. In that case, education becomes essentially spiritualistic in nature since "fate" or "God's will" alone can bring about change. The content of education becomes mythological, filled with fantasies and superstitions, consequently also authoritarian. Since its content is sacred, it cannot be questioned. The values and virtues advanced by this system of education will be complete submission and blind obedience not only to God, real or mythological, but also to all authorities. Patience and long suffering become important. Such education considers wealth and poverty, or development and underdevelopment, as two *parallel* lines co-existing from creation to doom's day. In short, society is considered as *static*, and therefore, *unchangeable* by man.

There can be another approach to development through education. One may consider society as dynamic, and poverty and underdevelopment as due to backwardness, and as controllable by man. Backwardness can be banished through scientific knowledge, use of technology, increase in production and decrease in population. This approach emphasizes the need for technical knowledge and supportive religious and cultural values and an orientation towards them. The motivation is heightened with an emphasis on the release of the *individual's* creative powers and energies. Thus education becomes oriented to achievement and profession. It aims at individual expertise and competence marked by academic and cultural sophistication. In order to achieve this goal, knowledge is transferred from the 'successful'

to the 'backward' and thus education becomes synonymous with a facility for *imitation* of those individuals and nations who have become 'successful'. Technical sophistication which is heavily stressed consists in copying the 'developed' individuals or nations. The emphasis is on capital intensive know-how and *competitive* skills. Such a system of education promotes academic sophistication from the *outside*. One must either import it, or migrate in order to obtain it. Education then is 'model-oriented': its goal is to 'catch up' with those who are technically successful, and considered as developed. Such education has its own impact on the religious, moral and cultural values of the learners. Their own religious moral and cultural sophistication has a model 'out there'. Learners are increasingly exposed to foreign values which have an individualistic appeal to their modes of thinking, feeling and behaving. The result is a 'cultural-grafting' though with some concessions whereby certain elements of the indigenous culture are glorified but at the same time only to be ossified. The end-product of such education is not the "New Man" of the Gospel, but the carbon-copy man of the same unjust social order which the popes too have repeatedly condemned.

A third understanding of human development through education is to view society as *dynamic* with a focus on the *polarization* which has taken place in our midst. Poverty and underdevelopment here is seen as *historically* created. God created man in His own image, with God Himself as man's heredity. But it is man who, through his conscious and deliberate decisions to accumulate wealth and power, has created underdevelopment and powerlessness for the majority in God's family. In this context education becomes *analytical*. It cultivates *critical reflection* both in the teacher and in the taught. Through critical perception, education becomes a process of demythologizing social realities, and assuming responsibility for radical change. It carries a challenge to renew the face of the earth. The content of such education is the social reality itself as it emerges in its totality. Methodologically, it is realized through progressive dialogue between the teacher (who is also a learner) and the learner (who is also a teacher). De-sophistication, identification of the ideological base, constant mutual criticism and evaluation, growing social awareness and a sense of one's own worth form part



and parcel of such education. This type of education implies participation in the creation of "the new earth and the new heaven" on earth. It hastens the coming of the Kingdom in our midst. For it aims at the creation of an *egalitarian social order* with social justice and human dignity for all, the God given birth right of every woman, child and man.

### Example of content analysis

It is not possible here to go into a deep analysis of India's educational policies, of school or college activities, of the content and method of education imparted in our institutions today. Such an analysis will require exact and concrete information from the educational institutions themselves, which information at present is not available. I shall, however, analyse just one lesson, content-wise, and show what such a lesson in the classroom may consciously or unconsciously lead a student to. I shall examine the lesson titled "Dick Whittington and His Cat".

The story, in brief, goes thus:

Dick Whittington (DW) was a poor orphan boy from Lancashire, northern England. He had no friends but a cat. He left for London to make a fortune there. For days and nights he had to live on the pavement until one day a rich merchant, who was a kind and honest man, employed him as his kitchen boy. But the servant, an elderly woman, was very cruel to DW.

The merchant traded with foreign countries. He also allowed his servants to send in his ships any of their goods for sale abroad, and gave them the proceeds. Upon the advice of Alice, the merchant's daughter, DW too sent his cat for sale.

Since he could not stand the cruelty of the servant woman, DW started to walk back to Lancashire. But on the way, he heard the Church bells ring thrice which seemed to say to him: "Turn again, DW, thrice Lord Mayer of London". DW returned to his master's house only to discover that his cat had fetched him a fabulous sum, seven bags of Gold. The cat was bought by the king of the Blackmoors to control the mice in his kingdom.

The servant did not want the merchant to give the seven bags of gold to DW, a mere kitchen boy. But the merchant was an honest man. He gave DW all the gold the cat had fetched.

The merchant called Dick and spoke to him kindly, and invited him to stay as his guest. DW stayed on and learnt to help the merchant in his business. Some years later he married Alice, and became a partner in the merchant's business. He was made the Lord Mayor of London not once but thrice. When he died, he left a great deal of money for the poor as charity.

Analysis:

- Some areas in a country and in the world are always labelled as backward; e.g. Lancashire, northern England, Bihar.

- Success for a villager is in the town, for a town dweller in the city, and for the affluent abroad; DW migrates to London; London-based merchant trades with other countries.

- Disillusionment takes place: DW had thought that the streets of London were paved with gold, but he had to sleep on the hard stones of the streets there, being unemployed.

- The rich are good and honest. The merchant allowed his servants to place their goods on his ships; he gave employment to DW; gave him all the seven bags of gold; allowed him to be his guest, made him a partner in his business, gave his daughter to him in marriage.

- Not so the poor. They are cruel and dishonest. The servant woman ill-treats DW and would not have the gold given to him.

- Certain types of people, like the blacks and the moors, are backward and stupid. The king of the 'Blackmoors' had not heard of cats as yet; he had bought instead tigers and lions to kill the rats and mice in his kingdom; he was so helpless on account of the mice that he had to go hungry.

- Technology and expertise come from outside: a cat from London solved the problem of the kingdom of the Blackmoors. The adviser was a ship's captain from London.

- Religion is coopted to legitimize accumulation of wealth. The Church bells are on the side of mercantile activities and transfer of world wealth to some places.

- Wealth is a mysterious gift. It comes not to all but to some. Its coming is associated with mystical numbers: bell rings thrice; seven bags of gold; thrice mayor.

Social mobility through wealth: After DW comes into the possession of seven bags of gold, he ceases working in the kitchen; he is now the guest in the merchant's house and is absorbed into the upper strata; now he is educated, marries the merchant's daughter and becomes a partner in business.

- Political power comes through economic power and social status: DW, now a rich and prosperous businessman, becomes the Lord mayor of London thrice.

Concept of development: Even with political power in hand and the experience of poverty behind him, DW does not change the *structures* which generate poverty: When he died, he left a great deal of money as *charity* for the poor. Wealth and poverty are considered not as the result of each other, but as two coexisting parallels.

A story like that can easily lead students away from the reality of society unless they are enabled to look at it with a critical eye. Consciously or unconsciously students internalise the values hidden in the lessons. A critical approach is essential.

### Alternate contents

Attempts at creation of alternate content can only be mentioned here. Examples of such endeavours are: "Education To Reality Through English Language", "Discovering Rural India Through Mathematics", "Education To Reality Through Mathematics: Apartheid in South Africa", "Chirag"<sup>1</sup> a Hindi manual for adult non-formal education, etc. Such material builds up in the learners a capacity of consecutive and logical thought; relates the matter of the text to actual experiences; and encourages social debate through a critical perception of reality around. Situations of poverty and deprivation form the content of education. Students are enabled to relate their own experience with its parallels in world society today. A theoretical framework is also offered within which students can fathom the functioning of an economic system that simultaneously generates

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1. "Education to Reality Through English Language", Volumes A and B, by Sr. Gladys D'Souza, R S C J., and Fr. G. J. Gonsalves S. J., Published by K. R. Educational Association, Bettiah, Bihar 845438, price: Rs. 4.75 per volume.

"Chirag", A Manual for Non-Formal Adult Education (Hindi), by the same authors and publishers, price: Rs. 2.00 per copy.

wealth and success for a few, while creating poverty and failure for the majority. Opportunities are also offered to students for testing the assumptions through practicals. Thus a growing social consciousness becomes a challenge to the generosity of youth and impels them to constructive action in the classroom (study projects). It must impel parents to activity like the organization of co-operatives, or publicity campaigns to create broader social awareness; and lead the public to put up exhibitions and dramas. Such challenges can be offered through numbers and mathematics, too, in a context that gives the students the ability to take stock of a given situation and relate it to life. This can be done not only in a context of institutional education but also through non-formal education, for example, in the slums and the villages. Moral science and catechetics, too, afford ample opportunities for education to reality.

### Conclusion

Education is a subsystem of society. It can either 'brain-wash' people through its content of phantasy and unreality, and lead them away from social reality; or 'deschool' them and make them perceptive to human inequalities and sufferings around them and their causes. Today's education considers unlimited ownership of private property, cut-throat competition and individual profit motive as values in themselves. What we need for re-structuring today's oppressive social order is a system of education which advances the values of common good based on the 'socialization' of the means of production as emphasized by Pope John Paul II in his recent encyclical, "On Human Labour". Thus cooperation will replace competition, and there will emerge an economic order which is need-based rather than profit-oriented. Some efforts to produce material with the content and the methodology of liberating-education are being made. In many places these attempts have yielded positive results.

The need of the hour is to initiate a process of education which will not only protest against and challenge the oppressive alienating values advanced by today's educational system but also sustain and lead the people to further critical group-consciousness of the humanly desirable form of social order and the means to achieve it.



# Education to Reality

## Education for liberation

We need an education which seeks Justice and Social Change. "The existing system of education is largely unrealistic to life, and there is a wide gulf between its concern and the concern and purpose of national development." (KOTHARI)

"I always knew there were many poor in our country, but had never seen so clearly the real extent of the problem."

"Wealth and Poverty we had always accepted these as unchanging and beyond our control. Our experience at this Seminar has hit hard at many of these myths and forced us to take a fresh look at the social and economic arrangements under which we live."

"Unless we are able to get our students to see and understand these realities, the entire process of the education we are imparting is meaningless."

"We are convinced of the need for change. But WHAT and HOW is the question, especially in view of the constraints of the present syllabus!"

These reflections and comments have come from teacher participants who have attended the workshops or training sessions called variously 'The Classroom, the Syllabus and Social Concern', 'A Parent-Teacher-Youth Trialogue' or simply 'Training Programme for Adult Educators and Social Animators.' The motivating factor has been a common quest for a new direction in teaching and exploring ways where by education could become more socially relevant and an instrument of social justice.

If indeed "the destiny of India is being shaped in her classrooms", and if, with Julius Nyerere, we believe that "The purpose of education is liberation through the development of man as a member of society", it is of crucial importance that educators, administrators and citizens alike should examine whether at all the content of present day education meets the above goals. An essential pre-requisite to such an appraisal is to

arrive at a common understanding of what one means by the word 'development'—development of what and for whom, for it is a word capable of a conveniently large number of interpretations. One of the main aims of the programme, therefore, is a systematic and exhaustive examination (or re-examination) of the basic issues of development and underdevelopment, the causes of wealth and poverty, the various subsystems of society and how they support the dominant social groups. Without such a study there can be no real re-orientation of values, attitudes, educational methodologies or curricula.

### **The approach**

The methodology, regardless of the length of the session, encompasses a wide variety of techniques and material—lectures, papers and discussion backgrounders; general and group sessions, individual and group reportage; films, sound slides, simulation—games, and role plays; surveys and other forms of practical activity both within the community and the neighbourhood—whatever proves most effective in stimulating and provoking critical reflection and a meaningful response. Naturally much depends on the composition of different groups, but experience with various groups indicates certain constants. For instance, a simulation game on the power dynamics in society most effectively creates the climate conducive to a discussion of Nyerere's brilliant paper, 'Is Poverty the Real Problem'. Group reflection and discussion immediately after the game on the causes of wealth and poverty, the process of enrichment and impoverishment, the attitudes of the rich and the poor in interaction with each other and various forms of domination and submission enable most groups to understand the full significance of Nyerere's conclusion that "the real problem is the division of mankind into rich and poor. The reality and the depth of the problem arises because the man who is rich, has power over the lives of those who are poor, and the rich nation has power over the policies of those that are not rich."

A much appreciated conclusion to this unit is a vocabulary exercise. Each participant is asked for three words which epitomize his/her experience of the game, the process analysis and discussion on Nyerere's insights. Each of these three words are

then used in three sentences which express the experience contained in the word. Teachers appreciate this method of vocabulary study: 'words' truly become a naming' of an experience. "Word" is thought or experience "incarnate"—a contrast to the much used method of taking a string of words, explaining the meaning of each to the best of one's ability and then inviting the children to make sentences with the word in order to test their grasp of the meaning!

Nyerere's challenge 'Is Poverty the Real Problem' concretized and internalized in the simulation game leads directly into what has been termed the 'Development Debate'. Certain assumptions are checked out:

1) that development/underdevelopment, wealth, poverty are closely linked realities, and only an identification of the generative forces can lead to solutions.

2) that our work and efforts to create awareness leading to action are implicitly expressive of our own analysis of these causes. Hence this unit involves a constant and deep probing of our own work and values—the philosophy of the group as it were and our vision of man in relation to society.

3) that our own socio-economic status conditions our understanding of wealth and poverty. The cause of poverty as identified by the rich will differ radically from the cause as identified by the poor. Time and again it has been interesting to contrast the reactions of the participants: whilst the predominantly urban middle-class groups have invariably cited overpopulation, a lack of education, or the 'laziness' and 'apathy' of the poor as the cause of poverty; those from rural or slum schools have unhesitatingly traced the cause of poverty to the inherent injustice of certain social arrangements.

### **Development : myth and reality**

To begin with, the pre-scientific approach to development is discussed. Wealth and Poverty are seen as parallel realities beyond the control of Man. As an extension of this belief emerges the policy of on-going relief and emphasis on charity together with the cultivation of such qualities as devotion and patience and acceptance. Since poverty is God-given, or is one's

fate, or is a normal constant condition, changing this condition is not considered. The harshness of poverty is tempered. The misery is alleviated with charity.

Most groups identify easily with these attitudes and responses, and have no hesitation in denouncing them as outdated and moving to a more acceptable approach to reality. The assumption that wealth or development is the direct result of successful utilisation of natural resources implies that poverty can be eradicated by tackling and overcoming ignorance, backwardness, and by increasing scientific knowledge. 'Try hard' and you will 'catch up' with those who have 'made it'! Probing further on personal levels brings out the beliefs in population control, the need for discipline and hard work, competition to identify and reward individual talent. Use international expertise to increase production and the fruits will 'trickle down' to all. Modernization is seen as the answer.

At this stage comes a deeper study of facts and figures on the Indian situation posing important questions. If modernization is the answer, why has our situation, after thirty years of planning for community development with all the input of materials and resources, no better? Perhaps even worse than ever before? An answer has been offered by the UN Research Institute for Social Development: "Where serious inequalities already exist, a technological advance leading to increased productivity is likely to be limited to those endowed with superior wealth and social status to the exclusion of the poor majority."

So the group moves on to yet another understanding of development where an in-depth analysis of the existing national and international socio-economic patterns leads to the inescapable conclusion that poverty is a historically created condition with its roots in the exploitation of man by man. For many participants, perhaps long isolated from political and social analysis, tracing the growth of colonialism and the new configurations of political power, the accumulation of capital unfair trade terms and the gradual polarisation of nations into First and Third World constellations of centre and periphery – all this is in the nature of a re-education. They are given a brief introduction to the historical evolution of societies, the process of



socialization and re-socialization and finally the main structures and values of Capitalist and Socialist societies. Against this broad conceptual framework follows an evaluation of our own stated national goals: where and how are they in variance with facts? To what extent do the sub-systems such as religion, culture, and education, the administrative and judicial set-up uphold the socialistic pattern as laid down in the Constitution; on the contrary, do they propagate the values and interest of a small dominant group in society? Would one, therefore, agree with Paulo Freire when he says, "there is no such thing as a neutral educational process"? These are some of the questions posed by the new approach of education to reality.

### Possibilities

Content analysis of the texts or films and of co- and extra-curricular activities form an important part of the process. How far do schools encourage the development of the critical faculty and democratic norms in the running of schools? Above all is there a conscious striving toward the values of co-operation, equality and justice for all? Most participants have agreed with Reimer, "Schools are for most people props for privilege and at the same time major instruments of social mobility." The third Bishops' Synod of the Roman Catholic Church puts it differently: "The schools and the mass media tend to be so much taken up with the established order of things that all they manage to produce is a 'carbon copy' man."

In addition to this basic theoretical background, certain inputs vary from course to course depending on current events, syllabic changes, national and international happenings. The UN Year against Apartheid was the focus of special attention in the year 1978 as a tangible result of which we now have a series of mathematical problems which, whilst dealing with ratios, graphs, area and percentages, also and effectively alert the student to the full horror of discrimination based on the colour of a man's skin. Used in a number of schools, it was Springdales, a Delhi school, which imaginatively came up with an exhibition of charts based exclusively on their working of the maths problems. Similar sets are being worked out on Tribals, Caste Problems and child Labour in India. The possibilities are endless, but

there is need for volunteers who will do this as a labour of love! Language teachers have an easier task in that they have an unusual and excellent text book which combines language teaching with social awareness. Culled from the pages of the Economic and Political Weekly, the New Internationalist and a variety of other sources, *"Education to Reality through English Language"* contains a selection covering various aspects of life in the third world. In the words of a recent reviewer of the book, Mrs. Meena Swaminathan — "The subjects covered range from the life of primitive tribes today, the diaries of early explorers and colonizers, apartheid, and race and caste discriminations, the condition of peasants, landless labourers and workers all over the world, to elementary lessons in monopolistic economies, environmental pollution, health care and literacy.... One hopes for many more such efforts in this direction. This is a Gandhian venture, and an endeavour to convince the enemy within by the power of truth force. More power to all engaged in this task!" Many teachers have constructed lessons in Hindi and Marathi along similar lines.

In 1979 with the Multinational Corporations coming in for increasing publicity and with the Seminar coinciding with the UNCTAD meeting in Manila, time was set apart for a study of the impact of Multinationals on the urban Middle-classes in India. The operations of the Multinationals and the Pharmaceutical Industry formed a specific case study. The session on 'Myths in Advertising', the concept of happiness and success propagated by advertisements, provided some of the most stimulating discussion and participation. 'Formula for Malnutrition' — a set of sound slides, was an excellent exposure of Nestles marketing practices and the growing campaign against the sale of tinned baby food in Third World Countries. 'The Strike' screened at this point, became a very meaningful presentation of the workers' struggle against the power of the capitalists and the ruthless repression workers often face.

"Man can be destroyed but never defeated" — "Man is not made for defeat." With growing division in society, the increasing polarisation of society into the wealthy and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, there is the will to restore the balance, to restore human dignity.

Anand Patwardhan's film '*Prisoners of Conscience*', together with lectures and slide-shows on the student movements in Thailand (1976) and Sri Lanka (1971) served to focus the need for constant vigilance against any encroachment on human rights and civil liberties in Third World Countries.

We were delighted to discover the work of a small but committed group of young people in Bombay who call themselves the Science Education Group. Their objective is very simple: to take Science out of the elite preserves to the people. Their chief goal is the cultivation of a scientific attitude to life in dealing with problems of day to day living. Their slide presentation on Urban Housing showed clearly, logically and forcefully the true horror of slum life, the reasons leading to this, the commoditization of land - speculation sided by authorities who claimed to be for the people, and the ultimate brutality of eviction. But, and here lies the difference - the film also gave pointers as to how the slum-dwellers could mobilize to combat this, showed them the appropriate legislation which could protect their rights, and by linking these facts to a literacy programme, they were able to motivate more and more people to learn, to read and write.

### Truth hits hard

Reading and discussion, probing and response, reflection prayer and self-analysis - recording the challenges, fears, questions and insights - the process is constant and ever-deepening; individual and group interviews till late into the night. Each unit is planned with care and thought to anticipate and lead on to the next in logical sequence. There is usually a veritable build-up of tensions which reflect how hard certain truths hit us as well as the values and attitudes we have hitherto had. There are regular reflection sessions variously conducted though the focus remains the same: Have any questions emerged for me? Any challenges? Responses to challenges? Insights? Fears and anxieties?

**Question** "Are all these real facts? Surely you are brain-washing us."

**Challenge** - "How and what can we do as teachers, parents, citizens to get more and more people to see reality this way and to do something?"

- Response* "But we had no idea ...how do we begin with our students?"
- Insight* -- "Yes -- now we realize how easy it is to corner the best in resources and opportunities -- yes, even to exploit almost without knowing it."
- Fear* "If we accept the third approach to development, it implies questioning and challenging the present structures. Would this not mean confrontation between the few who have economic and political control and the many who have neither? Given the affluent background of the children in our care, can such programmes of social consciousness ever work?"

Training programmes for Adult Education volunteers have echoed similar fears. The Government's policy statement says that one of the aims of the National Adult Education Programme (=NAEP) is to enable the 'illiterate and the poor to rise to their own liberation through literacy, dialogue and action'. If one of our tasks is to create awareness about their rights, this may cause tensions, conflicts and, perhaps violence from local power structures — those whose vested interests have been hit. How do we cope with such situations? A very strong plea was made at a recent meeting, by those involved in NAEP at the state levels, to create adequate support structures to deal with such situations.

Part of the practical training for teachers / animators was to spend three days in a tribal village near Bettiah (Bihar) actually living with a family sharing their life, food and privation (1978 and 1979). While many found it tough going, this was the reality which no civics book could ever bring alive. It was beautiful to see a very human relationship develop between the trainees and the villagers. It was brotherhood established.

As a result of these experiences in the field, and with the NAEP for 100 centres being run by Gabriel Gonsalves of the Rural Development Programme, they have also published an Adult Education Manual which uses a different approach to literacy, based largely on the experience of work with these communities of 'Dhaangads' and 'Musahirs'. "CHIRAG" groups



the alphabets structurally, relating the words chosen to certain real problems around which the community can come together for discussion and action.

The last few days of the training seminar are mainly devoted to intensive practical work - preparation of alternate and more relevant lessons, using newspapers and journals on current issues; composition of maths problems, songs, poems, and bhajans and prayers — again dealing with social issues and with the message being action-oriented; slogans, role plays, charts, teaching aids and bill-board planning — all these with especially non-formal education projects in mind. Participants are encouraged to plan such activities as will directly involve students in the life and problems of the community and neighbourhood. Illustrative of this is a pioneering project run by a small school in Delhi, Abner Memorial School, which has taken the unusual step of making it compulsory for Standard IX and X to do community service as their Work Experience. And this takes the specific form of running literacy centres for children and adults in areas as far fung as Shadipur (for the Rajasthani puppeteers), and in all the crowded gullies of Chandni Chowk, Jama Masjid and Red Fort.

A word about the organisers who work under the name of ETR (Education to Reality) Network. The pioneer was a nun, teacher and social scientist, Gladys D'Souza of the Society of the Sacred Heart. This international society of sisters, basically committed to the education of youth, has made a very fearless search — in various parts of the world — for educational relevance in the context of its own specific charism. In fact in 1976 they concluded that the educational dimension of their work was inseparable from the call to work for social justice. Gladys D'Souza found inspiring support in a Jesuit, Gabriel Gonsalves, whose own search had already led him away from the formal school system into non-formal education in the rural areas of Bihar. Together with others similarly inspired they worked to find adequate responses to the three-fold need which emerged from their research and investigations: the translation of theory to action, institutional transformation and relevance, an exploration of the potential within the syllabus and the class-

room for creating social consciousness. Around them is a tiny band of supporters and workers convinced of the need for this type of work. The odds and the working conditions are by no means ideal — physically the group operates from Bomby, Delhi and Bettiah; financially it is a continuing struggle!

The NAEP policy statement says, 'The Government has resolved to wage a clearly conceived, well-planned and relentless struggle against illiteracy to enable the masses to play an active role in social and cultural change'. Our hope and endeavour at ETR is to translate these words into some form of action. Therein lies the challenge, at gut level, to each individual participant and organiser during these seminars. Some have opted out, hoping ostrich-like, that the problem will solve itself; a few have reacted blindly, emotionally, violently, lashing out with the charge of communist brainwashing; most have remained, thoughtful, challenged, wanting to know more and convinced of the need to act. A small but growing nucleus of people is aware that this rather challenging understanding of development demands commitment to struggle; and any struggle against the powerful dominant group is no easy task. This approach, as does the policy statement of the National Adult Education Programme, points to the deprived class for leadership in liberation; — most of us belong to the privileged groups. But we are also increasingly clear in our minds that we have no other options but to work towards creating collective awareness which will lead to action oriented programmes, both in schools and within the community. Ultimately, this work is an expression of our collective will and belief — almost an article of faith — that Education means preparing people for a way of life that is genuine and utterly human. It is meant to awaken a critical sense towards society, towards people, life and the values they adopt. Education should prepare us to abandon all those values which fail to favour justice for all men. In developing countries the main aim of education should be to awaken people's consciousness. People should become aware of their situation. They should experience a call to change things through and through. Such awakening has started and with it has begun a total transformation of the world:

# Organising the Poor : Education for Life

## The Experience at Lonjo Village in Singhbhum

Singhbhum is the southern most district of Bihar state bordering on West Bengal and Orissa. This area, inhabited predominantly by tribals, has been in turmoil for the last few years. Recently the attention of the whole nation was focussed on this area because of the demand for a separate nation called Kolhan made by a section of the tribals of this region. For the last four years a movement called 'jungle katao' has been growing in Singhbhum as a reaction against the anti-people program of the Forest Corporation and the government of Bihar. There were eleven police firings on tribals in different parts of Singhbhum during this period. The most notorious of all these firings was the one at Gua on 8 September, 1980, when eleven adivasis awaiting medical care were gunned down by the police in a hospital compound. After this incident a reign of terror was let loose on the Adivasis by the police and the administration villages were ransacked, women molested, and thousands of innocent adivasis were arrested and put in prison in order to crush the voice of protest raised by them against the oppression and exploitation they are undergoing.

## Rich land with poor people

Singhbhum is one of the richest mineral areas of the country. A substantial part of India's needs of iron, copper, kyanite, manganese, chromite, asbestos, quartzite, apatite and uranium is met from this area. The Kolhan series of iron ore in Singhbhum is one of the richest iron-belts of the world. Singhbhum is also rich in forests. During the year 1976-77 the revenue from Singhbhum forests was Rs. 3,150,700 which constituted about 22% of the forest revenue of the state of Bihar. Singhbhum occupies an important position in the industrial economy of not only the state but also the country. There are

more than 14 large-scale industries in the district having an investment of over Rs. 100 crores. Some of the major industries in the area are, iron and steel, copper, cement, glass, biri, lac, tassar and many wood-based industries.

The natural wealth of this area contrasts vividly with the desperate poverty of the people the Hos, Mundas, Oraons, Gopes, Tantis and other Scheduled Tribes and backward classes – who inhabit it. They remain in a state of semi-starvation through-out the year. They have been the worst hit by the development of mining and the commercialisation of forests. The lion's share of the developmental benefits in the area is taken away by the immigrant outsiders whom the tribals contemptuously call 'dikus'.

There has been a tremendous increase in the influx of outsiders to this area during the last fifty years. This is evident from the fall in the proportion of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC & ST) in the total population of Singhbhum from 58.54% in 1931 to 46.65% in 1981. In 1961 the total number of immigrants to Singhbhum from outside of Chotanagpur area was 2,55,000 which was 12.44% of the total population of the district. Singhbhum has registered a phenomenal growth in urbanization. It has the highest proportion of urban population in Bihar. The number of towns in Singhbhum increased from 4 in 1931 to 20 in 1971. But who lives in these towns? In 1971 out of the total urban population of 6,39,764 only 16.2% were SC and ST although they constituted 49.7% of the population of the district.

Despite constituting 49.7% of the total population and 54.2% of the total working force of Singhbhum, the share of SC and ST in benefits arising out of the economic development of the region is dismal. Only 24.4% of the total workers employed in different industries belong to SC and ST. The immigrants who constitute about 13 to 15 per cent of the total population of Singhbhum appropriate more than 75% of the industrial jobs in the area. The position of the 24.4% SC and ST employed in industries is not enviable. They are the lowest paid unskilled workers in these industries and most of them dwell in slums in urban areas.



There are more than 250 mines in the Kolhan area of Singhbhum alone. This area is more or less exclusively inhabited by the people of the Ho tribe. These mines are privately operated by contractors who are mostly Marwaris from Rajasthan. They illegally take away the lands for mining purposes after driving out the tribal rayats from their agricultural lands. They destroy the tribals worshipping and burial places, sometimes give a nominal sum as compensation and start mining, often with the help of the local police. The original owners are made to work as coolies in their own lands for a small sum which is far below the minimum prescribed wage. Even these meagre payment is withheld in some of the mines for as long as two to three months. As a result of haphazard and illegal mining vast area of tribal agricultural land have been dug up and are lying idle all over Kolhan. The rayats are still paying land tax on these lands and lands under mining operation. The tribals are thus illegally dispossessed of their sole source of livelihood. A large number of landowning tribals are fast becoming landless coolies and bonded labourers in the mines. Many of them are being taken to work in the brick kilns and stone quarries of North Bihar, West Bengal and U. P. as contract labour on bonded-labour terms.

Biri making is the chief cottage industry in the district giving employment to more than a lakh of labourers. Most of the biri factories in the area are owned by Marwaris and Gujaratis who employ the local tribals on starvation wages. Kendu leaves needed for making biris are collected by the tribals from the forests. They make the biris. The Harijans make the bamboo boxes for packing the biris. All these for a pay which is far below the minimum prescribed wage. The labour and part of the raw materials are provided by the local poor, but the profit goes to the merchant from outside.

The whole network of administration which is a part of the organized loot of this area is run mostly by people from North Bihar whose only aim is to amass wealth for their families across the Ganges. The local people are denied jobs in their own homeland. For example, on 26th November, 1981 thirty two persons were appointed for the fourth grade jobs in the excise department in Singhbhum. All of them were people from North

Bihar. It is interesting to note in this connection that an interview was conducted at Chaibasa, the headquarter of Singhbhum district, for selecting people for these jobs, but was cancelled later on to accomodate people from North Bihar.

Thus what we have in Singhbhum is organized loot by a few outsiders on one side and a situation of starvation of the majority on the other. The correspondence between the exploiters and the outsiders is so vivid that the tribal word 'diku' came to mean both 'exploiter' and 'outsider'. At present the word 'diku' means 'the people of North Bihar', 'those who come from the other side of Ganges', 'those who earn their living here and send their earnings out to their homes in Bihar'.<sup>1</sup> The adivasis have a saying about the dikus:

"Dikuraṛiko jā hature suilekako boleā. pāllekako moṭona". The dikus enter any village thin as a needle, leave it thick as a ploughshare.

The dikus not only rob the tribals of their wealth but also treat them with contempt. They have no regard for their language and culture. They create division and tension among these simple peace loving people through their machinations. They create communal hatred between the tribals and the non-tribals. The vested interests and communal forces have joined hands to break the solidarity of the tribals and to demoralise them. Towns like Jamshedpur, Chaibasa, and Chakradharpur, where the majority of the people are outsiders, have become areas of communal tension. The Jamshedpur riots of 1979 and the recent tension in Chaibasa caused by the installation of the image of Mahavir in a plot of government land are manifestations of this tension. The R. S. S. supported by the rich Marwaris at Chaibasa and Chakradharpur are fanning this communal hatred to the interior areas. During a secret meeting recently held at Chaibasa they have decided to build temples in the tribal villages in the interior areas. Thus converting Singhbhum into a fertile ground of communalism these forces are aiming to break tribal solidarity in order to keep the tribals in eternal bondage so that they can carry on their loot unopposed.

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1) Nirmal Sengupta, 'Class and Tribe in Jharkhand', *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 5, 1980, p. 664.

### Situation in the Villages

As a result of the organized loot of the area by outsiders the situation in the villages is one of utter misery. Practically nothing is done for the welfare of the villager. Most of the villages are isolated and unapproachable due to lack of proper roads. Electrification and irrigational facilities are unheard of in these areas. Schools in many villages exist only on paper and the salaries of the masters of these bogus schools are divided among the corrupt officials of the education department. Medical services are practically nil. As a result the tribals resort to the only source available to them, the witch doctors. Agriculture is the sole means of livelihood these poor people have. Due to the frequent failure of rains the income from this source is minimal. Many of the tribals have mortgaged their lands to the rich villagers and many have lost them to the mining contractors and become paupers and coolies in the brick factories. The life of an adivasi is a constant search for work just to survive from day to day. Depending upon the season, he works in the paddy fields, works as road construction worker, forest labourer, etc. in and out of the region. The day on which an adivasi does not work he does not have food.

The adivasis who are by and large illiterate live in isolation and have very little outside contact. Their only contact with the outside world is at the market where the mahajans and traders snatch away their meagre products at throw away prices and sell them goods dear; or with the petty block or police officials who would harass them for a chicken or a cup of rice beer or with the forest contractors or Marwari mine owners who would make them slog at starvation wages. In such a situation of utter neglect and exploitation the adivasis continue to remain illiterate, ignorant and in perpetual starvation. Disease, superstitions, and bondages of old and new kinds continue to plague their lives.

### Organizing the Poor: The Lonjo Experience

It is in the context of this dehumanizing situation in the villages that the modest efforts made by the three of us, Pilar Guedea, Michael Tirkey and myself at Lonjo village to educate and organize the poor tribals to fight for their rights becomes significant. Lonjo is a remote tribal village in Singhbhum about

5 kilometers north-east of Sonua railway station on the Howrah-Bombay line. The people of this area are mostly farmers belonging to the Ho tribe. They are also involved in biri making and collection of forest products. A section of the village is inhabited by Harijans who make boxes for the biri factories.

Pilar was working in this area for six years before Michael and I joined her in October 1978. She had started a co-operative which helped the poor farmers to redeem their mortgaged fields and provided them with seeds during sowing season. All three of us lived in the village in a mud house built by the villagers for the co-operative. A brief account of our activities is given below.

*Adult Education Program:* Our first program was to start adult education centres in the villages. We had meetings in the different villages around Lonjo to tell the people about our program. Within a few months we were able to start 14 centres with an enrollment of about 400 students. The teachers were chosen by the villagers from their own villages. Every Thursday of the week the teachers came to the centre at Lonjo and gave a report of the classes. Besides discussing these reports with them we discussed also the various important happenings in their villages. We regularly visited the centres ourselves and had discussions with the students about their problems. These adult education centres served us mainly as entry points to the villages. As we began observing the people carefully and experiencing their life situation by our living with them we soon found out that literacy was not a felt need for most of the people of this area. Due to the famine conditions prevailing in the area their main concern was how to get their daily food to keep them from starving. They were also yearning to get out of the clutches of the exploiters like the contractors, government officials, police, traders and rich farmers to whom their fields were mortgaged.

*Organization of the cooperative:* During this time there were many government projects going on in the area to provide employment to the famine-stricken people. All these projects were given to the private contractors who in collusion with the block officials cornered most of the money and the labourers got very little as wages. In order to organize the labourers against this exploitation we got our farmers' cooperative registered as Lonjo Labour Cooperative Society Ltd. and began applying for con-



tracts of projects in the area. In the beginning we were able to get the contracts of a soil conservation program and a road construction project in Lonjo village from the Tribal Development Agency, Chakradharpur. With the help of these projects the Cooperative was able to give work to about 300 families and about Rs. 30,000 were distributed as wages. Whereas the private contractors were giving only Rs. 3 - per chowka for mud work, the Cooperative was giving Rs. 5 for the same work and was able to make about Rs. 7,000 as profit which belonged to the people.

The grain bank of the Cooperative helped the poor farmers by lending them seeds during the sowing season. They, otherwise, had to get these seeds from rich farmers at exorbitant rates of interest. The Cooperative also helped to redeem the mortgaged fields of about 20 poor farmers. One of these fields was given in mortgage for more than 25 years for a paltry sum of Rs. 50/. These redeemed fields were cultivated by the Cooperative for a period, not exceeding four years, until the money advanced was obtained from the produce of the fields; after that the fields were returned to the owners.

Our main aim of running the Cooperative was to educate the people about their rights and to organize them to fight for those rights. Regular meetings with the members were conducted for this purpose. The Cooperative gave self confidence to the poor tribals to deal with government officials, trained them to run projects and see for themselves the benefits of the scheme. It gave them courage to stand against exploitation by private contractors and government officials like the Village Level Worker, Overseer, Block Development Officer and the police. As a result there were many conflicts with these officials who saw that their selfish interests were threatened by the working of the Cooperative. They were, therefore, intent upon breaking the Cooperative and oppressing those who were connected with it. No food for work was given to the Cooperative by the block officials in spite of our repeated requests that all the projects in Lonjo pan-chayat should be given to the Cooperative. Instead these projects were given to the private contractors who gave bribes to the officials. When a group of workers together with one of the committee members of the Cooperative went to the B. D. O. to protest

against the bribes taken by the block accountant and the VLW for one of the projects they were driven out of the office with the help of the police. Protesting against this high-handedness of the officials a memorandum was submitted to the District Commissioner and the Police Commissioner with the signatures of the villagers. No action was taken against the corrupt officials but an arrest warrant was issued against the committee member on the charge of inciting the people. On an earlier occasion (December 1978) the houses of the president of the Cooperative and some other villagers were raided at night and the inmates were maltreated by the police on the pretext of searching for one of the Jharkhand leaders. A petition signed by the Munda (head) of the village was sent to the Chief Minister and other high officials complaining against the police atrocities in the village (see PUCL — People's Union for Civil Liberties — report on *Repression in Singhbhum*). When the police came to know about the complaint they again raided the village with vengeance and arrested the Munda, the president and two other villagers. They were in jail for more than two months and their case is still pending in the courts in spite of the report submitted to the Central Government by the Commission on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes stating that this is a clear case of atrocity against the adivasis. During the repression in 1980 after the Gua firings 26 persons were arrested from Lonjo village. One of them was a young boy. He was on his way to Goilkera for work. He was dragged out of the train, beaten mercilessly in front of his mother who was accompanying him and then sent to jail. Thus the vested interests and the official machinery in this area are trying their best to suppress the voice of protest raised by the poor adivasis against the exploitation they are undergoing. The right to life, right to speak, right to petition is not respected by the police and the officials in this area. If the poor adivasis struggle for their rights, then all they can expect is lathis, bullets and the police lock-up.

*Organization of Harijans and biri workers:* The Harijans in this area make bamboo boxes for the biri factories at Chakra-dharpur. Since they have no other source of income, their entire life depends on what they get from the sale of these boxes. At present they are faced with two major problems — non availa-

bility of bamboo and the low and fluctuating prices of the boxes. One of the reasons for the low and fluctuating prices was the competition between the four Harijan villages who supply these boxes to the factories. Since these villages are situated very far apart, the factory owners adopted a policy of divide and rule in order to keep the prices low. We had several meetings with all the four villagers together and we made them realise their folly. Although we were able to make them aware of what is happening we were not able to take any concrete action, such as organizing a strike to improve their condition, because of their complete dependence on the biri factories for their daily bread. Coming to know of our activities the biri factories threatened to get the boxes from outside the state and to find a substitute for bamboo boxes. We realized that more groundwork and resources are required before we could take any drastic action.

Biri making is a big industry in this area. The biris are supplied to the biri factories at Chakradharpur. Lots of exploitation by middle men and the factory owners is going on in this industry. None of the workers get the minimum rate prescribed by the government. The workers even do not know what the minimum rate is. We held meetings in different villages and put up wall posters to make the people aware of the actual rate they are supposed to get. As a result of our activities the rates in many villages went up slightly.

*Providing medical help;* Proper medical facilities are beyond the reach of the poor people of this area because of the bribery and corruption going on in the block hospital and the exorbitant charges made by the private doctors. As a result, most of them have recourse to the witch doctors and to sacrifice to the spirits. Because of the medical help we are providing, the people are gradually becoming aware of the real causes of sickness and are getting used to taking medicines.

### **Some reflections on our work**

We believe that the exploitation and dehumanization of the tribals of this area can be eliminated and they can have the basic rights to determine their future only if they have power, power over the forces that exploit and dehumanize them.

Therefore, they have to discover themselves as powerful people having the rights and responsibility to determine the course of their history and the fulfilment of their destiny as authentic human beings. Our role as educators lies in helping the people to be aware of their power and to organize themselves for the creation of a people's movement for building a new society based on the values of justice, love and peace. We are convinced that a genuine education leading to a people's movement for building such a society is not possible unless the educator himself is part of the process. Therefore, we tried our best to identify ourselves with the people, to experience their life-situation, their helplessness, their joys and sorrows. Our approach was one of insertion through a process of action-reflection into the existing situation of the people in order to change it. It may be called an incarnational approach.

Our work of organizing the people led us to many conflict situations, conflicts with those inside the community and conflicts with those outside the community. We believe that conflicts are essential for the organization of the people. If the function of the organizer is to attack apathy and create people's participation, it is in actual fact an attack upon the status quo of the community. The so called 'peace' prevailing in the community is the peace of the graveyard which has to be disturbed to bring genuine peace. Conflicts help in bringing unity and cohesion in the group and in clarifying the purpose of its actions. Conflicts also help in eliminating the selfish and in bringing up new leaders in the community. In short, a conflict is the crucible where the genuineness of the people in the movement is tested.

Looking back at our life and work at Lonjo we feel that it has given to the people a new image of the Church and the religious. The people gradually began to see that we were not there to 'convert' them. Neither were we there for distributing charities. We did not want the people to be passive, puppet-like recipients of special private or public services. We wanted them to participate as fully as possible in the working out of their own problems. Giving help to people without their active participation in the action is not giving but taking; taking from them their dignity. The people saw that we were interested in the



well-being of all, that we shared with them their joys and sorrows and worked for the upliftment of everyone. The life at Lonjo was also a tremendous experience for each one of us personally. It has helped us in experiencing the life and poverty of the people. Our own group living and the frequent reflections and sharing we had helped us in our personal growth.

One of the criticisms raised against our work by Church and religious authorities is that there is no faith dimension in our work. I would like to emphasize here that, on the contrary, it is the faith dimension which kept us going forward in this work. This faith consists in believing that our world is *not* past recovery. It is a faith which believes that it is *possible* to achieve a transformation in the present structures of injustice and that people *can* build a new society based on the gospel values of freedom, fellowship and justice; that is, a faith in the coming of God's kingdom on earth. Above all, it is the faith which believes in the God who breaks into our human history in the event called Jesus Christ to bring good news to the poor and to set free those who are oppressed.

Mathew Areeparampil

# Ramponkar's Struggle for Justice and its Educational Aspect

## I. Local setting

The people of Goa are by nature peaceful. The fishermen are no exception. For centuries they lived peacefully in their huts or at best pucca mud houses which dotted the 105 kms long sea coast. They were happy to make ends meet from the abundant resources of the sea which they made available at low price to the consumer in the market. This peaceful life-style was rudely shaken with the advent of mechanized trawlers ostensibly in the name of progress and development. The mechanized trawlers, however, were not given to the poor fishermen through co-operatives, but to the business community. Gradually the traditional fishermen not only could not get sufficient catch for their support but even their nets and boats were damaged. At first they were confused and did not know how to react. Soon their confusion gave way to anger and sporadic reprisals against the enemy. This got them into unforeseen trouble like harassment by police and constant calls to law courts and landing in jails. The state power and the money power weighed heavily against them. This led to despondency, discouragement and to a sense of fatalism among the people. Their sufferings continued.

However, a major calamity rudely woke them up from their stupor. Suddenly, large quantities of fish began to die due to pollution from a fertilizer plant. The shores were littered with dead fish. The people not only lost their catch to the trawlers, but were deprived even of the remaining fish. The fishermen were now faced with the grave problem of fish extinction if something was not done immediately. In this confused state they approached some dedicated social activists who had managed to put up a strong fight against pollution successfully.

With that a ray of hope fell on their lives. They knew they were not alone in their battle for survival. Their new guides

immediately started conscientizing and organizing them, and soon pointed out to them that they should first of all unite and try to impress upon the government the importance of implementing the existing laws to prevent trawlers from fishing close to the shore in shallow waters. Up to now they had never known or seen the Pharaohs of modern society, the politicians and the bureaucrats. Together with their social animators they entered the portals of the seat of power and their hopes grew as the ministers and government officials promised to find a solution to their grievances soon enough.

As time passed their hopes vanished for nothing happened. The people grew conscious that they were fighting an unequal battle against heavy odds, the corruption of politicians and bureaucrats, and the greed of trawler barons who had enough money to bribe them. This led them to decide upon a new approach. They were convinced that only a united and determined effort to achieve their own liberation would bring them success, and that they would have to face many hardships and unforeseen eventualities. But they took a bold and courageous decision. They undertook a chain hunger strike to highlight their plight. Demonstrations of unprecedented magnitude were held as well as rallies of thousands of fishermen with their families. Dharnas and other democratic forms of protest were staged. All this brought them renewed hope, but also severe repression from the government. They were lathi charged and jailed and threatened with death.

Naturally, there were moments of frustration and discouragement. A feel of doom crept over the people as they faced almost insurmountable hurdles. But they still carried on the struggle, and gradually a new path was resolved upon. The people decided to arrest the trespassing trawlers and haul them up ashore. Soon some trawlers were pulled up and fines collected. This temporary success increased the fishermen's courage and deepened their realization that after all they were strong enough to deal with the problem, at least to some extent. The trawler owners now became cautious but violations continued. The people retaliated further and this led to the burning of two boats. It was a climax of a long struggle for survival. Severe repression by the police followed but this only served to make

the people more determined to fight still more unitedly till full justice should be done to them.

We can see that all through it has been a dialectical process of successes and failures. There were moments of joy and hope when promises were made or trawlers hauled up and fines collected. There were moments of frustration when hunger strikes and public protests led to jails and no apparent solution was in sight. There were times when people thought of giving up the fight. However in this process of struggle, the people gradually grew in the consciousness of their dignity as human beings and understood the inbuilt injustices in the present structures. They now want not only a solution to their problems but a government that is just and fair to the toiling masses at large. In other words, a process has gradually set in enabling the people to cast off the yoke of slavery, to which they themselves had contributed by their apathy and political ignorance. They are now on the way towards the fulfilment of the hope of a just society, though this is still very far off.

## II. Conflict-confrontation as a method of action

From what I have said above and from my personal involvement in the Fishermen's struggle from the very beginning, I may safely conclude that in organizing people for power success depends on the use of a conflict confrontation method. This is the main path of action. Some may ask: "Why should we use the conflict confrontation method between the oppressed and the oppressor? Isn't this un-Christian? Why don't we just encourage the people to improve their lot through integrative or self-help projects? Well, the reason is simple: these methods overlook or deny the reality of oppression, or they try to gloss over it.

The oppressed are generally treated as the "deviant" or "marginal" members of society. In other words they are persons to be pitied, subjected to therapy and otherwise rehabilitated so that they become acceptable to oppressor standards. That is why the oppressors' favourite tools are the social workers. But the conflict confrontation method brings to the conscious level the hidden oppression as well as the oppressive forces and mechanisms, and equips the people to take their destiny in their own



hands. The oppressor must be confronted. As long as he remains remote, his image is an awesome one of the powerful and all-knowing. But once the people confront him with their legitimate demands, they recognize his true identity and also see his weaknesses.

Conflict confrontation involves mass participation and preparation. Preparation means determining the proper demands, devising the tactic that will be most effective, anticipating the sequence of events through role playing etc. Mass participation means that the entire people affected by a particular issue should participate directly in its solution. Conflict confrontation does not mean that the purpose of mobilization is to start a riot or unleash senseless violence. It means that confrontation entails conflict over the bargaining table and outside of it, the precise form of it being determined by its advantageousness for the people. The organizer should never be afraid of conflict. It is during the moments of conflict that the oppressed shed their fear and feelings of inferiority and begin to sense the presence of power in their hands.

### III. Some basic organizing principles

While organizing the people an activist must have certain basic principles to guide him both in confronting the oppressor and in building up the people's movement. Some of the principles:

1. *The establishment provides the opportunity to radicalize the people.*

The establishment does oppress the people, and once the people realize this in a specific and personal way, they are bound to get angry. Secondly the establishment makes all kinds of promises and declarations to the people, which it is not willing to fulfill. By pressurizing the establishment to live up to its promises, you can beat it to death with its own book of rules. Thirdly the establishment reacts to the people's organized actions, especially tactics outside its experience, in ways that further weaken it and antagonize the people.

2. *Tactics against the oppressor should be within the experience of the oppressed, and outside the experience of the oppressor.*

Within the experience of the oppressed would mean, on the one hand, that the organizer not only explain his own experiences to the people, but especially help the people to grasp the message through reflection on their own experience. On the other hand, it would mean that one has to take into account the tactics. People usually function in habitual ways and do not venture into an action that is too unfamiliar. It is best if the

new action simply adds a new twist, a new dimension, or a new objective to an already familiar experience.

Outside the experience of the oppressor would mean that the oppressor is thrown off balance by people's action and is confused so that he will probably react in a way that is to the people's advantage. The action must therefore be unfamiliar to the enemy. The enemy's consequent clumsy reaction is bound to radicalise the people further.

3. *People generally act on the basis of self interest, but must go farther.*

This is very true of groups which are just starting to organize themselves. In the beginning, when the people have had very little experience working together, they will generally look for their own interests. However at a latter time in the organizing process, they will act mainly on the basis of some principle rather than on the basis of self interest.

4. *Throughout the organizing process, the people make their own decisions.*

Though the organizers have a very active role in the whole process of building people's organizations, in agitating, persuading, arguing, suggesting, challenging, analyzing, planning, and so on the one thing the organizer cannot and should not do is to take over decision-making from the people.

The people must make their own decisions. This is both a question of principle, i.e. the people are the ones who suffer oppression and who must work out their own liberation, and a question of practicality. The organizer cannot reach too many people at one time, much less supervise them. If they have not wholeheartedly decided something for themselves, the decision will come to nothing as soon as the organizer is not around.

To safeguard the decision-making right of the people, the organizer should suggest different tactics in one to one conversation but in the actual meeting he should not participate prominently but let the people thrash out the final tactic. In short the organizer should act as a catalyst and not a manipulator.

These basic principles you may say are culled from practical experience of involvement in the fishermen's struggle for survival and justice. They are not the final word nor fully exhaustive but definitely they have a deep educational ethos of their own. They are important for a liberative education of the masses.

# The Passionate Pedagogy of the Prophets

If the writings of the prophets are still cherished today, it is because they express an intense passionate life-experience. God was not less real to the prophets than the world around them, and they passionately loved both God and people. Their mission was to bring God's message to the people, and to bring the people's deepest needs to God. They were mediators and intercessors. Their call was to share God's total involvement with his people. This was bound to be a most painful process, a severe struggle that demanded nothing less than heroic love and generosity—the struggle that was to reach its peak in the Passion of Jesus Christ.

The nature of this process and the progress and resolution of the accompanying struggle are not equally clear in the recorded message of all the classical Israelite prophets. For our present study we will confine ourselves to just two of them—Hosea, a prophet of the 8th century B. C., and Jeremiah, whose ministry occurred in the closing years of the 7th century and the early years of the 6th.

## 1. A prophet in the making

Among the writing prophets Hosea alone was a citizen of the Northern kingdom of Israel. He carried out his mission within the stormy period which followed the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II, and which was to end in the collapse and destruction of the Northern kingdom and the dispersion of the ten tribes who constituted it. How troublous this period was can be guessed from the fact that, out of the six kings who followed Jeroboam II on the throne, four were assassinated in palace revolutions.

Only a few of the prophets tell us about how they came to be called by God and entrusted with a mission. Their call is generally presented as a single event through which they became

vividly aware of God signifying his special purpose to them, and strengthening them and equipping them for their mission. (see Jer. 1:1ff). In the case of Hosea, the nature of his call and the way God prepared him for his mission seem to have been very peculiar.

Hosea's vocation-experience coincided with a deep awareness of the close guidance of God in the crucial personal experiences of a loving relationship that Hosea was going through. He had fallen in love with a charming girl whose character conformed to the disjointed times in which she and her people were living (Hos. 1:13f). She was most lovable, and had no lack of admirers on whom she generously showered her favours. Hosea had reason to think that she had a special concern for him. But was she really reliable? What assurance of the future could he have if he took her proffered hand, and accepted her as his life partner? Would he not be making himself highly vulnerable, and laying himself open to serious risks?

As he was debating this intricate problem within himself, God intervened to enlighten him. Should not Hosea learn from God himself? Had not God betrothed to himself the whole vast multitude of humans, knowing quite well that so many of them would prove seriously unfaithful to him? Would God have been able to enter into his marriage-Covenant with humankind if he wanted first to make sure that everyone would respond faithfully to his love? Does not God love the unlovely and pursue with his continued gracious invitation those who go on refusing stubbornly to accept his offer of love and communion?

This inspiration sounded convincing. Why should Hosea hesitate to follow God's own example of self forgetting love? He went ahead and married Gomer, his favourite girl, though she was the cynosure of many eyes. He would trust in God who was guiding him. Hosea had to pay very dearly for this leap in the dark which he made through his reliance on God.

What followed in their married life was much worse than anything Hosea could have expected. All was fairly well during the first few years till they had their first child. Thereafter the waywardness which was part of Gomer's nature began to make



itself felt more and more. It was impossible for Hosea to restrain her. The result was that he had reason to doubt whether the second child born to her was his or not. The doubt seemed to be confirmed when God inspired him to call this child, a girl, "Not-loved" (in Hebrew, *Loruhama*). Which normal parent would not love his or her own child? Things went from bad to worse. Gomer paid no attention to Hosea's sensitivity and feelings. She would have her own sweet will and way. When a third child, a son, was born to Gomer, God inspired Hosea to call him, "Not-my-people" (*Loammi*). This time there was no more any doubt left.

## 2. God discovered in the agony of love

But through this inconceivably painful trial Hosea was learning what it means to love unselfishly. God was teaching him to forget himself, and to continue to love Gomer for her own sake. As a result of this mysterious divine instruction, Hosea found that he continued to be deeply concerned about his wife-turned-whore, and he kept track of her. In the process he became more and more aware of the incomparably greater torments of love endured by an incomparably greater Lover—God himself. Does not God yearn after every single human being, keep knocking at the door of every human heart, continue ceaselessly to send everyone his urgent messages of tender love, and still what response does he get from so many? He is ready to be sought and found, but people are not asking for him. He offers himself saying, "Here am I, here am I", but people are not listening. He spreads out his hands all the day to a rebellious people who follow their own thoughts and walk in evil paths, whose reply to him is: "Keep to yourself; do not come near me; I am too sacred for you!" (see *Is. 65: 1f*).

## 3. Redemption is only through love

It was not enough that Hosea suffered passively. He must see how he could win Gomer back for himself. This is the way of God who has proved himself in the long history of his people to be the Good Shepherd ever solicitous for the lost sheep. This process of meditation in the presence of the God of love gradually transformed Hosea's aching heart so that all anger

and bitter resentment were transmuted into tenderness and active compassion. Acting under divine impulse, Hosea decided to seek out his long-lost wife who could have reduced herself to misery and weariness by then, and could be waiting for deliverance. He was right: Gomer was not repentant, but ready to respond. She was grateful to her husband for his unusual love which could forgive her outrageous conduct, and come to her rescue when she had been reduced to helplessness and despair. Full reconciliation and reparation required that Hosea should appoint for his penitent wife a period of reformation (Hos. 1-3).

#### **4. Hosea must proclaim what he had discovered**

When Hosea pleaded so eloquently the cause of the divine Husband spurned and rejected by an ungrateful and hardened people, he knew what he was speaking about. Like his wife once, a whole people were stubbornly playing the harlot and going after their many "lovers" and putting their trust in them rather than in the God who had brought them out of their slavery in Egypt.

The result was that compassionate love and faithfulness had disappeared from their personal and community life: instead there was lying, cursing, killing, stealing, committing adultery. They broke all bounds, and murder followed murder. It was not surprising that Nature did not favour a people who had turned rebellious against their Creator and Saviour (Hos. 4: 1 ff).

The freely forgiving and healing love of God is supremely effective. The prophet's attitude reflects, faithfully the attitude of God characterised by a severe burning opposition to all evil, demanding from the people a fierce discipline, and a consuming zeal for them expressing itself in passionate appeals to their lukewarm hearts.

#### **5. Introducing Jeremiah**

Curiously, in the limited sphere of his own tumultuous family life Hosea was finally blessed with a foretaste of that restoration which his people as a whole were not destined to realise in the foreseeable future. His own experience of the victory of love over untruth gave him the needed strength and courage to persevere in a thankless mission which meant pro-

claiming God's love and sovereignty to an unbelieving, uncomprehending, apostate people. But the God who inspired Hosea to marry a prospectively unfaithful woman had a quite different message for poor Jeremiah: "The word of the Lord came to me: You shall not marry a wife; you shall have neither son nor daughter in this place. For these are the words of the Lord concerning sons and daughters born in this place, the mothers who bear them and the fathers who beget them in this land: When men die, struck down by deadly ulcers, there shall be no wailing for them and no burial; they shall be like dung lying upon the ground. When men perish by sword or famine, their corpses shall become food for birds and for beasts" (Jer. 16:1ff).

## **6. A people on the verge of collapse and fall**

There was much that was rotten about the seventh century state of Judah. The people had forsaken the Covenant-God who had gathered them to himself, had forsaken his law of love and shared living, and, having abandoned the fountain of living waters, they had hewed out for themselves broken cisterns that could hold no water (Jer. 2: 13).

Though they had eyes, they saw not, and though they had ears, they heard not. From the least to the greatest of them, everyone was greedy for unjust gain. From prophet to priest everyone dealt falsely, and they were not ashamed of committing the worst abominations. The priests who were supposed to instruct the people in the observance of the law of God which had been entrusted to them, did not really know God. The political leaders, who were supposed to govern the people in the name of God, were the first to break his law.

## **7. The blind leading the blind**

The professional prophets who spoke in God's name were in reality uttering the deceit of their own hearts. They had never stood in the council of the Lord. They had never seen him or heard his word or obeyed it. Though God did not send them, they went on mission. Though they never listened to God, yet they prophesied, following the promptings of their own stubborn hearts. They were not at all concerned about turning the people from their evil course and their evil doings. They were simply buoying up the people with false hopes. The vision

they reported sprang from their own imagination; it was not from the Lord. To those who spurned God's law, the message of these false prophets was: "Prosperity shall be yours". To those who stubbornly persisted in their own evil course of oppression came the message of these self-appointed prophets: "No disaster shall befall you".

The official priest-leaders vied with the false prophets in making a negative contribution to the life of society. The priests firmly adhered to their own dogma of the inviolability of Jerusalem and the temple: "This is the (inviolable) temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord". The people were encouraged to put a superstitious trust in the temple and its observances and ceremonies and celebrations. The priests did nothing to help the people truly to amend their ways and their doings. There was no concern about executing justice one with another. People oppressed the alien, the orphan and the widow.

### 8. Facing a desperate situation

All this meant that the people had lost touch with the new religion and faith and worship that they had been taught through the Sinai Covenant, and they had accommodated themselves to the debased debasing superstitious religion and cult that flourished in the land of Canaan where they had settled. They were putting their trust in the cult of the many hill shrines and in the orgies on the mountains. Jeremiah represents God as saying about his people: "My people are foolish; they know me not; they are stupid children; they have no understanding; they are skilled in doing evil; but how to do good they know not" (4:22).

Jeremiah's prophetic vocation was to taste and see that it was evil and bitter for people to forsake Yahweh their God (2:19). His vocation was to suffer with the people and for the people who were too unheeding and insensitive to realise the depth of the tragedy in which they were involved: "Deep within me my heart is broken; there is no strength in my bones. Because of the Lord, because of his dread words I have become like a drunken man, like a man overcome with wine. For the land is full of adulterers, and because of them the earth is



parched; the wild pastures have dried up. The course that they run is evil, and their powers are misused. For prophet and priest alike are godless; I have come upon the evil they are doing even in my own house. This is the very word of the Lord" (23:9f).

### 9. **Joining God's struggle for the soul of society**

No matter how hard the mission proved to be, no temptation to hopelessness could make Jeremiah flinch from performing his appointed task faithfully in one trying situation after another. When words seemed to be too weak for his purpose he had recourse to symbolic actions. Thus once when the prophet was sure of the Babylonian threat materialising, but his message was resisted on all hands, he went and bought an earthenware jar, then took with him some of the elders of the people and of the priests, and went out to the Valley of Ben-hinnom, to the dumps used for depositing broken potsherds and garbage and the bones of criminals. There he announced to them the certainty of disaster coming on Jerusalem and Judah because of their foolish ways and policies. To confirm this message he gave symbolic expression to it by shattering the Jar before the eyes of the witnesses who had come with him, and said to them: "Thus says Yahweh of hosts: Thus will I shatter this people and this city as one shatters an earthen vessel so that it cannot be mended..." (19:1f.)

### 10. **"Stricken for the transgression of my people" (Is. 53:8)**

The heart of Jeremiah's mission was to suffer through the apostasy of his own people. He was "like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter" (11:19). We are reminded of one greater than Jeremiah, the one who was still to come, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jeremiah was keenly conscious of what the divine election of his people really meant. God had made them his people in order that they might learn to do justice and righteousness, to rescue the victim from his oppressor, and not to ill-treat or do violence to the innocent and helpless. If they obeyed, they would be prosperous; if they failed, their house must become a desolate ruin.

### 11. **"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Rev. 21:4)**

But, like all the prophets, Jeremiah was fully aware that, no matter what tragedy happened, God's grace was always ready

at hand to redeem and restore a penitent people. His confidence in the glorious future that God had prepared for a repentant people never wavered. God would bless them with peace and prosperity through the Righteous Branch, the descendant of the house of David (33:6ff). The people who survived the sword would find grace and rest in the wilderness of their self-invited exile. The Lord who had loved them with an everlasting love would appear to them again, and continue his faithfulness to them. He would build them up again as a people most precious to him. Those who were now rocking in their grief would repent in shame and remorse, and the Lord would restore them as his own beloved children in whom he delighted. His heart yearned for his lost children, and he was filled with tenderness towards them. He was patient with them, and after they had reduced themselves to utter misery by their wrongdoing, his free grace would enable them to turn to him and to receive from him the forgiveness of all their sins. He would remember their sin no more.

This final restoration would consist in Yahweh setting his law of love within his people, and writing it on their hearts, so that, having truly learned from Yahweh himself by a true conversion of heart, they would become his people, and he would be their God (31:31ff). This consummation of the New Covenant was to be ushered in through the coming and ministry of the promised Messiah. But apparently in our own day the human world is not less recalcitrant towards the Creator than in the days of the weeping prophet Jeremiah.

### Conclusion.

The strength of the prophet was their total identification with their people in all the positive aspects of their common existence. Their distinction was that they saw the people as God saw them, and shared fully the divine love and concern. They were convinced that the people could only achieve their true destiny by their God-directedness and their people-directedness. The cancer of self-seeking and self-aggrandisement that infected the body politic could only mean a process of disintegration leading to the death of the nation. Time proved that the prophets were right and their opponents were wrong. Bitter experience taught the people that there was hope for the future only on condition that they shared the struggle, the agony and the vision of the prophets.

# Jesus the Teacher: the Liberative Pedagogy of Jesus of Nazareth

Almost everything we know about the Jesus of history comes to us from the Gospels, and primarily from the first three Gospels (the so-called Synoptic Gospels). For the Gospel of John, though containing historical traditions of great value, is much less reliable than the Synoptics as a historical source.<sup>1</sup> And all three Synoptics feature 'teaching' as a prominent element in the ministry of Jesus. It is mentioned conspicuously by Matthew in his strategically placed summaries of the Galilean ministry of Jesus, which tell us how he "went around Galilee, *teaching* in their synagogue, *preaching* the good news of the Kingdom, and *healing* every disease and every infirmity" (Mt 4,23; 9,35; 11,1). Mark too likes to show Jesus teaching great crowds on the shores of the lake of Gennasareth (Mk 2,13; 4,1; 6,34); and Luke has frequent reference to Jesus teaching in synagogues (Lk 4,15; 4,31; 6,6; 13,10) or in the Temple (Lk 19,47; 20,1; 21,37).

What was this 'teaching' of Jesus like? What sort of educational model did he follow? Such questions are not easy to answer, since the Gospels (which alone allow us access to the words and works of Jesus) are not 'biographies' in any presently accepted sense of the term. They are not 'memoirs', reporting a remembered sequence of events, or handing down carefully memorized sayings of Jesus in exactly the circumstances in which they were originally uttered. Instead they are 'mosaics'; carefully edited compilations of stories about and sayings of Jesus, which circulated as isolated units in the oral tradition of the early Church, and were then put together by the evangelists to give us theological profiles of Jesus.<sup>2</sup> The Gospels are thus 'narrative Christologies', which spell out for us in story and saying the significance which the Jesus experience in its totality (his life, death, and resurrection) had for the evangelists and their communities.

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1. Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, I-XII [Anchor Bible] (New York: Doubleday, 1966) xlvii-li.

2. George Soares-Prabhu, "Are the Gospels Historical", *Clergy Monthly* 38 (1974) 112-24; 163-72.

(Yet,) in spite of many difficulties, the task of getting to know Jesus the teacher is not an altogether hopeless one. For while the Gospels do not supply us with much reliable biographical information about Jesus, they do allow us to encounter him. The accuracy of many of the details they report about Jesus is disputable; but the over-all "impression" of Jesus they communicate, is certainly accurate enough.<sup>3</sup> And the Jesus they reveal is conspicuously a 'teacher', whose educational perspective is, I believe, substantially indicated in the three comments which the Synoptic tradition makes about his teaching: that he "went about *among the villages* (of Galilee) teaching" (Mk 6,6); that he "taught them as one who had *authority* and not as the scribes" (Mk 1,22); and that he taught everything "*in parables*" (Mk 4,33). There is no reason to doubt the historical accuracy of these comments on the teaching of Jesus. If we study them carefully we shall come to know Jesus the Teacher, and learn a great deal about the pedagogy he used.

### 1. Teaching in the villages

The 'teaching' (*didaskhein*) of Jesus is clearly distinguished in the Gospel tradition (explicitly in Matthew, implicitly elsewhere) from his 'preaching' (*keryssein*). For while Jesus 'preaches' the "good news of the Kingdom" (Mt 4, 23), that is, announces God's definitive offer of salvation as already present; he 'teaches' the "way of God" (Mt 22, 16), that is, spells out what our proper response to the proclamation of the Kingdom must be. 'Preaching' is thus proclamation: the announcing of the good news; 'teaching' is ethical and religious instruction: an explanation of the form that the 'repentance' or 'conversion' (*metanoia*) brought about by our acceptance of the good news must take. Preaching and teaching are thus complementary aspects of the educational project of Jesus.

#### A non-elitist pedagogy

This educational project is, according to the Synoptic tradition a public project. The teaching of Jesus is not academic teaching, restricted to the members of a scribal school trained in the Law (as was the teaching of the Jewish scribes of his time); nor is it a secret religious teaching given only to a select group of initiates who have been admitted into 'the covenant

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3. Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1960) 25-26; Eduard Schweizer, *Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1971) 11-12; C.H. Dodd *The Founder of Christianity* (London: Collins / Fontana, 1973) 47-48.



of grace' (as with the Essene sectarians at Qumran).<sup>4</sup> Instead, the Gospel tradition shows us Jesus going around the towns and villages of Galilee (Mt 9, 35; Mk 6, 6; Lk 13, 10), teaching all who were ready to listen to him — indeed specially "the uneducated, the poor, the sinners, and the social outcasts".<sup>5</sup> It is truly the 'poor' who have the good news preached to them by Jesus (Mt 11, 6; Lk 4, 18).

Indeed the obscurity of Jesus' constituency is remarkable. Apart from Jerusalem, he appears to have taught in none of the major cities of Galilee or Judea. Neither Scpphoris nor Tiberias, capital cities of Galilee, are mentioned in the Gospels as places visited by Jesus. Instead we find him moving around obscure hamlets like Nazareth, mentioned nowhere outside the New Testament (Mt 2, 23; Mk 1, 9); in remote fishing villages like Bethsaida (Mk 6, 45; 8, 22; Lk 9, 10); and in small rural townships like Capernaum, which seems to have been his headquarters during his Galilean ministry (Mt 9, 1; Mk 1, 21; 2, 1; 9, 33; Lk 10, 15). It has been said of his 'missionfield' that: whenever we have any specific information (as distinct from vague general statements) the terms used are such as to point unmistakably to the countryside.... I would emphasize that in so far as we can trust the specific information given us by the gospels, there is no evidence that Jesus ever even entered the urban area of any Greek city. That should not surprise us: Jesus, as I indicated at the beginning, belonged wholly to the *chōra*, the Jewish countryside of Galilee and Judea.<sup>6</sup>

Jesus, that is, taught in the villages (*kōmai*) rather than in the cities (*poleis*) of Palestine. He was more at home in the rural countryside (*chōra*, *agroï*, *mêre*, *horia*) than in the hellenized (one might say 'westernized') urban settlements.

The teaching of Jesus is thus far removed from the intellectual elitism of the Academy, or the spiritual elitism of

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4. Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (London: Collins / Fontana, 1976) 26.

5. *Ibid.*, 26-27.

6. Geoffrey de Ste Croix, "Early Christian Attitudes to Property and Slavery", in Derk Baker (ed.), *Church Society and Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975) 3.

the Indian theological schools, which demand a high level of spiritual and emotional maturity ('discrimination of what is eternal and non eternal: renunciation of all desire to enjoy the fruits of one's work here and hereafter; the acquirement of tranquility, self restraint and the other means; and desire for release') as "antecedent conditions" for the 'enquiry into the Brahman'.<sup>7</sup> Jesus makes no such demands. To understand him one needs no unusual intellectual ability, no particular moral probity, no special spiritual stature. His teaching is open to (indeed specially intended for) the 'little ones', unlearned in the Law; and the 'tax collectors and sinners' who have no moral or religious standing whatever. All that is required is an open heart—for ultimately the teaching of Jesus is not the imparting of doctrine but the communication of love.<sup>8</sup>

### A praxis-oriented pedagogy

This message of love is proclaimed by Jesus in word and in deed. 'Preaching' and 'teaching' are complemented by 'healing' in Matthew's summaries of Jesus' Galilean ministry (Mt 4, 23-9, 35); and Mark, quite strikingly, proposes the first miracle of Jesus, his exorcism in the synagogue at Capernaum (Mk 1, 21 - 27) as 'teaching'—for the 'chorus' or acclamation which the miracle provokes relates the exorcism to Jesus' authoritative teaching, mentioned immediately before (Mk 1, 22): "What, then, is this?, the crowds cry out, "A new *teaching*? With authority he commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him" (Mk 1, 27). The exorcism is thus presented by Mark as Jesus' authoritative teaching become deed.<sup>9</sup>

This in fact is how Jesus understands all his miracles. They are not for him 'signs from heaven', proofs authenticating his person or his mission: for Jesus consistently refuses to offer such proofs (Mt 4, 1-11; Mk 8, 11-12; Lk 11, 29; Jn 4, 48). But

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7. So Shankarācharya commenting on the first of the *Brahmā-Sūtras* of Bādarāyana – cf. Klaus Klostermeier, *Kristvidya* (Bangalore: CISRS, 1967) 11-16, for the 'pre-requisite' attitudes demanded by the various schools of Hinduism.

8. cf. *I Say Unto You: Talks on the Sayings of Jesus, Volume I* (Poona: Rajneesh Foundation, 1980) 54-55.

9. Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium I* [Herders theologischer Kommentar zum NT] (Freiburg: Herder, 1976) 124.

they are 'signs of the Kingdom', indicating to those who have the eyes to see that the saving power of God is already at work among them. The healings of Jesus are signs that the Kingdom of God is dawning (Mt 11, 2-6); his exorcisms signs that Satan's oppressive rule is coming to an end (Mt 12, 25-29).<sup>10</sup> And this too is how Jesus understands his table-fellowship with 'tax collectors and sinners' (Mk 2, 15; Lk 15, 1). For such 'communion' with the untouchables of his society, so scandalous to his pious contemporaries, was a proclamation in action, powerfully announcing the wholly unconditioned character of the Father's love (cf. Mt 6, 45).

Word and deed thus go hand in hand in the teaching of Jesus, and one would be quite unimaginable without the other. In the concrete, action-oriented biblical culture to which Jesus belonged, words without deeds to 'fulfill' them, would have been as empty as deeds without words to expound their meaning. The sharp dichotomies between spirit and matter, soul and body, word and action, preaching and social concern - so characteristic of the post Cartesian West, and indeed of post Upanishadic India would have made little sense to Jesus, whose own teaching avoided both the 'verbalism' of the unauthentic word unable to transform reality; and the 'activism' of frenzied activity deprived of reflection.<sup>11</sup> Indeed his pedagogy is an authentic example of the fine blend of action and reflection which Paulo Freire calls *praxis*, reminding us that: Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed even in part the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world.<sup>12</sup> This is profoundly true of the word spoken by Jesus.

## 2. Teaching with authority

The effectiveness of the word spoken by Jesus always a performative word or a language event which does not merely inform about, but which *transforms* reality derives ultimately

10. George Soares-Prabhu, "The Miracles of Jesus Today", *Jeevadhara* 5 (1975) 189-204.

11. Cf. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972) 60.

12. *Ibid.*

from the authority (*exousia*) with which it is spoken. 'Authority' is conspicuous feature of the teaching of Jesus as reported in the Gospels. The crowds who hear him (whether in the synagogue at Capernaum witnessing his first miracle, as in Mark; or on the 'mountain' in Galilee, listening to his first sermon, as in Matthew) are "astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Mk 1,22; Mt 7,29).

This is an astonishing comment; for the scribes at the time of Jesus were not without considerable authority of their own. They belonged to one of the three dominant classes of the Jewish society of the time, rivalling and eventually superseding both the priestly aristocracy (the 'chief priests') and the lay nobility (the 'elders') in their claim to influence and power.<sup>13</sup> Their influence derived not from their birth (as did that of the priestly aristocracy, who belonged to one or other of the four high-priestly families); nor from the wealth they could command (as did that of the 'elders', who were either large rural land-owners or merchant princes from Jerusalem). but from their learning. "It was knowledge alone", reports Joachim Jeremias, "that gave power to the scribes".<sup>14</sup> For though some scribes, like the historian Josephus, may have belonged to the priestly aristocracy, or, like Johanan ben Zakkai the restorer of Judaism after the debacle of A. D. 70, may have been prosperous merchants, most came "from the unprivileged part of the population". They were largely artisans, like Shammai, a carpenter, or Saul a tent-maker - that is, manual workers who owned the tools of their trade, and so would belong to what we would call today the *petite bourgeoisie*. Occasionally they were even, like the great Rabbi Hillel, who, it is said, earned his keep as a day labourer, 'proletarians', owning no means of production at all.<sup>15</sup>

Yet the scribes enjoyed great authority because of their learning - that is, because of their specialized and even esoteric knowledge of the Torah and of the oral traditions, both legal (*halakhah*) and religious (*haggadah*), which had grown up around it.<sup>16</sup> Such knowledge acquired through long years of assiduous

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13. Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1969) 233.

14. *Ibid.*, 234.

15. *Ibid.*, 233-34.

16. *Ibid.*, 237.



discipleship in the scribal schools, and institutionally recognized by an 'ordination' – (*s mikāh*) which licensed made them 'ordained scholars' (*h-kāmim*), equipped the scribes for "key positions in the administration of justice, in government and in education", in a society which was still strongly theocratic;<sup>17</sup> and set them up before the people as prestigious religious leaders with special competence in religious affairs.

How, then, could it be said that Jesus taught "with authority and not as the scribes"? Obviously the point being made is not that Jesus had authority (for the scribes had authority too), but that his authority was of a very different kind from that exhibited by the scribes.

### A revolutionary authority

The scribes had authority as custodians of an authoritative tradition, which they had been trained to master, to hand down with meticulous fidelity, and to defend with well-honed arguments derived from the Torah through well-established traditional methods of interpretation. Their authority, to use Max Weber's convenient classification, was 'legal'. It rested "on a belief in the 'legality' of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands".<sup>18</sup> Scribal authority was thus strictly institutional.

The authority of Jesus was of a very different kind. For Jesus had no official standing in his society. He did not command the power of wealth (he was a 'wandering charismatic' with "nowhere to lay his head" – Mt 8, 20);<sup>19</sup> he was academically unschooled (*mē memathēkōs*, untrained in the scribal schools as Jn 7, 15 says of him);<sup>20</sup> he was cultically incompetent, since he was not born into a priestly family (Mt 1, 1–17). Thoroughly 'lay' (religiously and academically) by birth and by upbringing, Jesus accentuates his institutional powerlessness by opting out of the structures of his society and becoming a 'wandering charismatic'.

17. *Ibid.*, 235–236.

18. Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, ed. Talcott Parsons (New York: Free Press, 1964) 328.

19. The expression is from Gerd Theissen, *The First Followers of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1978)

20. Jeremias, *Jerusalem* (see n. 13 above) 236.

He thus de classes himself, leaving the ranks of the *petite bourgeoisie* into which he was born for those of the property-less proletariat. His authority, then, derives not from the traditional institutions of his society, but from his own personal charisma. It is an almost perfect example of what Max Weber calls 'charismatic authority', which rests on "devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him".<sup>21</sup>

More precisely, the charismatic authority of Jesus is 'prophetic', similar to that of the Old Testament prophets. His charisma, like theirs, is based not on personal magnetism but on the possession of the 'spirit'. It derives, that is, from a profound religious vocation-experience, in which "a man is grasped by God, who authorizes him to be his messenger and preacher and speaks through him".<sup>22</sup> Jesus probably had such a call experience at his baptism by John (Mk 1, 9-11). For when he is asked by "the chief priests and the scribes and the elders" (representatives, that is, of the Sanhedrin, the supreme religious authority of the Judaism of his time) to legitimate his teaching "by what authority do you do these things or who gave you the authority to do them?"), Jesus replies by referring them to his baptism by John: "the baptism of John, was it from heaven or from men?" (Mk 11, 27-33). This is not an attempt to evade the issue by posing an embarrassing question, which, by reducing his questioners to silence, will relieve Jesus of the need of replying. It is a genuine answer to a question legitimately posed by the religious authorities of his people. For by referring to the baptism of John, Jesus is really asking official Judaism whether it is prepared to recognize extra-institutional, prophetic authority, such as is claimed by John (Mk 11, 32) and by himself; and he is probably pointing to his baptism by John as the moment of his prophetic calling.

Joachim Jeremias has argued, quite plausibly, that the baptism of Jesus by John was the occasion for his 'abba experience' — the overwhelming experience of God as unconditional love, which was to be the basis of Jesus' life and the ground of his mission.<sup>23</sup> For all Jesus' preaching, teaching and healing was centred on the Kingdom (God's definitive saving action) appears precisely in this revelation of his unconditional love. The baptism

21. Weber, *Theory* (see n. 18 above) 328.

22. Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology, Volume I* (London: SCM, 1971) 52.

23. *Ibid.*, 49-68. This is not to deny that Jesus may have been conscious of a special relationship to the Father, even before his baptism.

of Jesus, his act of submission to the Baptist and of identification with sinful humanity,<sup>24</sup> thus becomes the occasion for a 'foundational' experience, homologous to the 'enlightenment' of the Buddha under the boddhi tree, or to the call-experience of the Old Testament prophets. Here Jesus becomes "conscious of being authorized to communicate God's revelation, because God had made himself known to him as Father".<sup>25</sup> The authority of Jesus is ultimately rooted in this experience of God as *abba*.

Such charismatic authority is always innovative. "The genuine prophet" notes Max Weber, "like the genuine military leader and every true leader in this sense, preaches, creates, or demands *new obligations*".<sup>26</sup> Indeed the whole point of charismatic leadership (at least in the biblical tradition) is that it is summoned for tasks which the necessarily conservative institution cannot possibly undertake. Charismatic leaders are raised up ("called") to initiate new moments in salvation history (Abraham, Moses); to counter new threats (Gideon); to re-new a people grown slack in their observance of the Covenant, or tepid in their single minded devotion to the Covenant God (Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah).<sup>27</sup> Charismatic authority is thus extra-institutional, and as such inevitably attracts the hostility of the institution. The prophet becomes an 'authorized transgressor'. His teaching (like the teaching of Jesus) is inevitably sensed as subversion. "Within the sphere of its claims", Max Weber reminds us, "charismatic authority repudiates the past, and is in this sense a specifically revolutionary force".<sup>28</sup> Now true this is of the authority of Jesus, with his radical critique of Law and Cult (Mk 2, 23-28; 7, 1-23), his revolutionary image of God (Lk 15, 1-32) his new and utterly radical demands on his followers (Mt. 5, 21-48; Lk 10, 25-27). needs no elaboration.

### A liberative authority

But if charismatic authority is revolutionary *vis à-vis* the larger society in which the charismatic group exists, it tends to be paternalistic and authoritarian within the limits of the group. The charismatic leader, because of his strongly personal charisma,

24. On the significance of this gesture of Jesus for Asian Christianity, cf. the quite extraordinarily insightful article of Aloysius Pieris, "Monastic Poverty in the Asian Setting", *Dialogue* 7 (1980) 104-18, sp. 113-15.

25. Jeremias, *Theology* (see n. 22 above) 68.

26. Weber, *Theory* (see n. 18 above) 361.

27. George Soares-Prabhu, "The Priesthood as a Call in the Old Testament", in Thomas Thyparambil (ed.), *Vocation: God's Call to Man* (Poona: NVSC, 1975) 53-70.

28. Weber, *Theory* (see n. 18 above) 361-62.

tends to exercise absolute personal control over his followers. This is strikingly evident in the *guruwāda* of Hinduism, which identifies the guru with the deity itself, and calls for the total surrender of the disciple to the Master. "The *guru* is Brahman, the *guru* is Vishnu, the *guru* is the Lord Achutya; greater than the *guru* there is no one whatsoever in all the three worlds", intones the *Yogashikupanishad* one of 108 Upanishads which are part of the official religious literature of Hinduism;<sup>29</sup> so that, as Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh reminds us, "struggle is not the key with the Master, surrender is the key".<sup>30</sup>

The implications of such a Master-disciple relationship have been spelled out by Arun Shourie in his sharp critique of Hinduism: The basic propositions here are threefold: first, that I do not have the capacity to find my own way as my current capacities and attainments are limited; second that it is, therefore, imperative that I should follow the prescriptions of another; and, third, that in order to be able to do so I must completely surrender myself to him, in particular, that I should completely delegate my thinking function to him.<sup>31</sup>

How similar these are to the presuppositions of what Paulo Freire has called the 'banking system of education' is obvious. For here too: Education becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques, and 'makes deposits' which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat.... Knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing.... The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite: by considering their ignorance as absolute, he justified his own existence.<sup>32</sup>

Obviously teaching of this sort can scarcely be liberative. Instead it belongs, as Paulo Freire would say, to "the ideology of oppression";<sup>33</sup> and is, as Arun Shourie has convincingly demonstrated, an effective means of the "repressive socialization" which creates servile subjects for authoritarian rulers. For, "an individual who has internalized these notions and has conditioned

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29. Quoted in Arun Shourie, *Hinduism: Essence and Consequence* (Sahibabad : Vikas, 1979) 356-57.

30. Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, *The Mustard Seed: Discourses on the Sayings of Jesus taken from the Gospel According to Thomas* (Poona : Rajneesh Foundation, 1975) 8.

31. Shourie, *Hinduism* (see n. 29 above) 372.

32. Freire, *Pedagogy* (see n. 11 above) 46.

33. *Ibid.*



himself to such subject acceptance of authority in the spiritual realm shall be equally servile to authority in the temporal realm".<sup>34</sup>

Is the teaching of Jesus, issuing from his charismatic authority, of this kind? There is no doubt that we find in it apodictical statements of great power (Mt 5, 21-47; Lk 22, 25-26), uttered with an authority ("but I say unto you"; "it shall not be so among you") that goes well beyond the authority of the Old Testament prophets speaking in the name of Yahweh ("thus says the Lord"). It is certain too that Jesus demanded from his followers an unswerving fidelity to his person, outweighing all other human values and ties: a demand quite unparalleled in the history of his people (Mt 10, 37 = Lk 14, 25-26). It is also regrettably true that the teachings of Jesus have been used extensively by the Christian community as a means of repressive socialization; for history shows clearly enough how frequently the Gospels have been invoked to legitimize feudal oppression, colonial exploitation, anti-semitism, and religious persecution of every kind. Freedom has scarcely been a value greatly cherished by the Christian churches! But it *was* a value for Jesus — precisely because his teaching was not so much the imparting of 'sound doctrine' as the communication of a message of love. But there can be no love without freedom — that is why there is always a dialogical element in the teaching of Jesus, a profound respect for the interlocutor, rare in the utterances of charismatic leaders. This appears strikingly in the characteristic form that Jesus chose for his teaching — his parables.

### 3. Teaching in parables

The parables of Jesus are possibly the most authentic form of his teaching that we possess: so strikingly personal in their style that "we stand right before Jesus when reading his parables".<sup>35</sup> Not only do the parables bring us right back to the Jesus of history, they also reveal to us a basic dimension of all his teaching. For as Mark tells us in his concluding comment to the parable discourse, "with many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything" (Mk 4, 33-34). Now Mark obviously cannot mean that Jesus did not use other, non-parabolic forms of discourse in addressing the crowds. What he is saying is that there is a 'parabolic' character to all Jesus' public teaching. By

34. Shourie, *Hinduism* (see n. 29 above) 372.

35. Joachim Jeremias, *The parables of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1972) 12.

this Mark probably meant that the teaching of Jesus is always 'mysterious revelation', a disclosure of "the secret" (Mk 4,11) that the Kingdom of God comes not in power but in lowliness and suffering.<sup>36</sup> But the parabolic character of the teaching of Jesus, rightly pointed out by Mark, can also be understood differently. It means, I suggest, that all the teachings of Jesus, his words as well as his deeds, are, like the parables, dialogical and critical: they involve the listener in creative response, and they put into question the accepted values of his 'world'.

### A dialogical teaching

The parables of Jesus are dialogical. They do not convey information, offer prescriptions, or give lessons to a passive and receptive listener. Instead by telling a 'shocking' story, they provoke and tease the listener into a radically new insight into his own situation, which the parable has put before him in story form. This is beautifully brought out in the parable which the prophet Nathan tells David in 2 Sam 12,1-7, an unusually clear example of the way in which parables work. Nathan's story of a rich man, who though owning 'very many flocks and herds', yet steals the 'one little-ewe lamb' which his poor neighbour possesses, in order to feed the unexpected guest who has arrived at his place, provokes David to violent anger. "As the Lord lives", cries the king, "the man who has done this deserves to die" — only to be told with shattering effect: "You are the man". By narrating David's 'theft' of Uriah's wife figuratively, in parable form, Nathan is thus able to get David to 'see' his situation for what it is. He is made aware of his sin — personally and not just notionally, at gut-level and not just in the head. A direct confrontation, say a moralizing sermon by Nathan, full of righteous indignation, would never have achieved this. It would only have made David more defensive. But Nathan's parable is able to bring David to a new understanding of his situation, and to induce him to pass a judgment on it. And it is this judgment that provides the 'lesson' of the parable and completes it.

The parables of Jesus are like that. They too are not 'moral stories' teaching lessons. Sayings of Jesus have indeed been added to the Gospel parables to serve as lessons (cf. the long list of such sayings added to the parable of the Dishonest Steward in Lk 16,9-13); but these are additions of the early Christian tradition and not part of the parables as spoken by Jesus. In its original form, every parable of Jesus is a story which

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36. Madeleine Boucher, *The Mysterious Parable* [CBQ Monograph Series 6] (Washington, D. C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 1977) 80-84.



"remains 'suspended'... so long as the listener has not decided for or against the new possibilities for living opened up in it".<sup>37</sup> It is the listener who must supply the 'lesson' as he hears the parable and feels it strike home. His reaction is integral to the parable, for without it the parable would remain incomplete. It takes two to make a parable: for the parable is essentially an open-ended, dialogical form.

For all its authority, then, the teaching of Jesus is not authoritarian. His pedagogy is neither indoctrination nor propaganda. Jesus, in his parables, does not attempt to inform or persuade: he tries only to make his listeners aware. The parables of Jesus are in fact a form of what Paulo Freire has called 'conscientization'.<sup>38</sup>

### Critical teaching

The awareness to which the parables of Jesus provokes the listener is a critical awareness; for the parable, as John Dominic Crossan has brilliantly demonstrated, is essentially a subversive form. As such, the parable is the 'binary opposite' of another kind of symbolic story, the myth. For where myth establishes and sustains a 'world' (that is, a particular way of structuring and interpreting reality), parable subverts it.<sup>39</sup>

The parables of Jesus are, in fact, continually subverting the world of his listeners: inverting their expectations, upsetting their accepted attitudes and values. In them labourers are paid the same wage for unequal hours of work (Mt 20,1-15); respectable law-abiding people are said to be less acceptable to God than dishonest 'tax-collectors' and shameless 'sinners' (Lk 18,9-14 Mt 21,31); priests dedicated to God's service callously ignore a wounded man lying on the road, while a half-pagan Samaritan cares for him (Lk 10,29-37); gentiles are invited to the messianic banquet from which the 'children of the kingdom' are excluded (Mt 8,11-12; 22,1-10)... Truly the listener's 'world' is turned up-side-down. Such subversion, Crossan suggests, opens the listener to the action of God (the Kingdom) by upsetting the 'certain certainties' on which he runs his self-sufficient and self-centred life. It confronts him with 'transcendence'. The parables of Jesus are *not* historical allegories telling us how God acts with mankind; neither are they moral example-stories telling us

37. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus An Experiment in Christology* (London: Collins, 1979) 158.

38. For a systematic examination of the term 'conscientization'. cf Paulo Freire, *Cultural Action for Freedom* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972) 51-83.

39. John Dominic Crossan, *The Dark Interval* (Niles, Illinois: Argus Communications, 1975) 54-62. A truly beautiful little book.

how to act before God and towards one another. They are stories which shatter the deep structure of our accepted world and thereby render clear and evident to us the relativity of the story itself. They remove our defences and make us vulnerable to God. It is only in such experiences that God can touch us, and only in such moments does the Kingdom of God arrive. My own term for this relationship is transcendence.<sup>40</sup>

But this, I suspect, is too narrow a way of understanding the parables of Jesus. There is more to them, surely, than merely the communication of an individual experience of transcendence.<sup>41</sup> For there is a positive side to the parables underlying their negative function of subversion. The parables of Jesus subvert out 'world', only because they point (figuratively, metaphorically, in a glass, darkly) to another 'world' ("one whose margin fades forever and forever as we move"), where relationships are structured not by ambition, greed and selfishness, but by love.

All education, it has been said, is either education for domestication or for freedom.<sup>42</sup> That the non-elitist, transforming, prophetic, dialogical and critical pedagogy of Jesus was highly liberative is evident. Certainly his first followers experienced it as such. "Christ has set us free in order that we might remain free" exclaims Paul in his letter to the Galatians (Gal 5,1) – and we can still catch in this exultant cry the joyful rush of freedom that must have been experienced by those who were exposed to the liberative pedagogy of Jesus. This pedagogy was liberative in a double way. As a non-elitist, dialogical teaching, it liberated people by making them conscious of their worth as children of the one Father in heaven (Mt 6,9), whose value derived not from personal ability or social status but from the inalienable reality of the Father's love (Mt 6,26; 18, 10–14). And as prophetic and critical teaching it freed them from the manipulative myths which legitimized their oppressive and alienating society, and pointed them towards a new fraternal and non-exploitative 'world', in which men and women could live together as brothers and sisters under the one Father who is in heaven, taught by the one Teacher who is the Christ (Mt 23, 8–10). Any pedagogy that claims to be Christian, must be liberative in this sense.

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40. *Ibid.*, 121–22

41. Boucher, *Mysterious Parable* (see n. 36 above) 14–25

42. João da Veiga Coutinho, in his Preface to Freire, *Cultural Action* (see n. 38 above) 9.